AT THE SIGN OF THE BLUE BOAR

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AT THE

SIGN OF THE BLUE BOAR.

A STORY

OF THE

REIGN OF CHARLES II.

BY

EMMA LESLIE,

AUTHOR OF "OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LION," "BEFORE THE DAWN," "SAXBY," ETC.

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AT THE SIGN

OF

THE BLUE BOAR.

CHAPTER I.

AN ACCIDENT IN CHURCH.

IT was a sweet, soft, Sunday morning, early in the spring of 1662, when our story begins, "The hush of God's own Sabbath" seemed to have descended upon London, and, like the morning mist, wrapped it round in a mantle of peace. Here in Fleet Street, where 'prentices clamored and worried passengers all the week, there was rest and quiet at last, for as yet King Charles himself made some show of decency in regard to the observance of this day; and so there were no roystering courtiers swaggering through the streets, disturbing peaceful citizens; and the citizens themselves were for the most part in church, for in those days London merchants lived over their shops, and city churches were well filled.

St. Dunstan's here, near Temple Bar, was crowded to standing room; for it had been announced the previous Sunday, that Dr. Bates's pulpit would be occupied by the king's chaplain, Mr. Baxter, of Kidderminster, whose fame as a preacher was so well known in London that crowds followed him wherever he went. The doors of St. Dunstan's had been shut before the time for service to begin, and many had gone away disappointed; but before the time for closing came they were flung wide open, and a frightened, terror-stricken crowd poured into the street, breaking the stillness with screams and groans and exclamations of horror. A few staggered and fell as they reached the roadway, but no one seemed hurt beyond the fright, and no one could tell exactly what had happened, except that there had been cries that the church was falling. When the tumult of the first rush was over, and people had time to recover a little from their panic, those who had rushed out first began to creep back and look up at the old church walls.

"I don't believe they're falling," said one.

"Falling! no; if they were like to fall, they would have come down in the great storm we had a little while ago. I shall go back," con-

cluded the speaker, seeing that the thin stream of people now leaving the church paused on the threshold, and looked back regretfully at their vacated seats.

"Mr. Baxter has never left the pulpit," said one.

"No; he has just said he will go on with his sermon when the church is quiet again," remarked another, pausing undecidedly near the door.

This was sufficient to decide other waverers.

"It's only half past nine," said one, "and the sermon not half over; I shall go back." And the people began to press toward the doors again; but as they would have passed in, they were pushed back by a little knot of people, who were carrying a young girl, to all appearance dead. Of course, the panic spread again among those who had begun to turn back, and a cry was raised that the back of the church had fallen in; but a gentleman walking near those who carried the girl instantly quelled it.

"See now, good people, this accident is occasioned by your senseless fright, and not by the falling of the church wall. The rattling down of a little loose mortar, that would

scarce injure a mouse, hath so robbed ye of your wit, that this poor girl, besides several others, have thrown themselves from the gallery, down among the people in the church."

"Is she dead?" asked one, looking at the white, drawn face lying on the shoulder of the young man carrying her. He was her brother, and by his side walked another sister, almost overcome with grief and dismay.

"Now, who will fetch me a carriage?" said the gentleman who had previously spoken; then, turning to the young man, he said: "Can you carry her to the Temple Stairs, think you? It will shake her less to go by water, and you live near Paul's Wharf, you say?"

"Yes, at the sign of the Blue Boar,', said the young man, mechanically, for all his attention was given to watching the death-like face of his sister. "This will be our mother's death-blow," he said, speaking to the one who walked by his side.

"Nay, nay; she hath but swooned, I trow," said the elder gentleman. "I will get a waterman to carry you to Paul's, and will speedily follow with a chirurgeon. Send the carriage to Temple Stairs for me," he said, addressing the crowd, who still lingered outside the church.

Many had gone in again, and Mr. Baxter had resumed his sermon; for the most seriously injured of those who had thrown themselves from the gallery was the young girl now being carried home. A boat was soon obtained at Temple Stairs; and as the boatman pushed off, a carriage came in sight, into which the gentleman leaped, and told the man to drive to the house of a well-known doctor, whom he fortunately found at home, and quite willing to accompany him to the sign of the Blue Boar.

In those days signs were not monopolized by inns and taverns. Nearly every shop had its sign; so it was no easy matter to find out the particular Blue Boar wanted, amid the labyrinth of narrow streets and alleys that led down to the water-side in the neighborhood of Paul s Wharf. The Blue Boar seemed to be a favorite sign, too, among the dwellers of this water-side neighborhood; and after several stoppages had been made at wrong places, the gentleman at length paid the coachman and dismissed the carriage, for the doctor had suggested that they could pursue their inquiries better on foot. After the carriage had gone, they made their way to the landing-stairs, where, as they had hoped, they found a

boy who had seen the poor girl carried ashore and watched where she was taken. It was only a few yards off—a shop where ropes and ship cordage were sold; and they had to pick their way carefully between the coils of rope and heaps of general litter that filled every corner of the small shop.

They were evidently expected, for they had scarcely knocked before the door was opened by the young man who had carried his sister home. He led the way up a narrow, dark staircase; but the room above was large, and looked out upon the river. Here they were met by an elderly lady, whom the young man, with a courtly grace, introduced as "Mrs. Aylmer, my mother."

"My name is Coventry," said the gentleman, bowing; for he felt instinctively that he was in the presence of gentle, refined people, despite the poverty of their surroundings. "I have brought a chirurgeon to see your daughter, madam," he said.

"Will you come this way? We have laid her on the bed," said the lady, entering a small room, at the door of which she had been standing.

The doctor closed the door, and Mr. Coventry had time to look round the sitting-room,

and notice more particularly the attire of young Aylmer, which he saw had once been rich and handsome, but was shabby and threadbare now, and evidently had not been made for its present wearer. The furniture of the room, too, was an odd mixture of faded splendor and sordid poverty. The young man seemed greatly embarrassed at the presence of a stranger, and, as if in explanation of the peculiar surroundings, said: "We have not been in England long."

"But you are English?" said Mr. Coventry.

"O yes," said the young man, quickly; "but we had to leave the country after—after the death of our late king."

"I see. You are Royalists, and have come back to claim your own."

The penetration of his visitor seemed to put the young man at his ease at once.

"Yes; Aylmer Court will soon be in the hands of its rightful owners again," he said; "and then, sir, you will find the Aylmers are not ungrateful. For the present, until the king can settle this business, I am afraid—O, this accident is most unfortunate!" he suddenly broke off; "for I know not how we shall pay the chirurgeon."

"Nay, nay; that is my affair, not yours," said Mr. Coventry; "and if you must talk of payment, at least postpone it until the king has settled this business for you."

"Thank you for your consideration. I will try again to see the king to-morrow. If I could but see him," added young Aylmer, "we should not remain here another hour: for he knows my father gave up home and lands, and life itself, to serve his father and himself, and he will be sorely vexed when he knows of our poor estate here."

"How long have you been here?" asked his visitor.

"Only a few weeks. We were to have come over immediately after the king; but my father was taken ill at that time, and died in Flanders, and none of the letters he wrote during his illness ever reached the king's hand."

"Was he ill long?" asked Mr. Coventry.

"More than a year; and we were in sore straits then, for the last of my mother's jewels were given for the king's service before he came to England."

"And you have received nothing in return?"

But young Aylmer's Royalist sympathies were aroused at the question, or the tone of

it, and he said, quickly: "How could we, since the king knows not of our poor estate? As I say, it will be but to ask and have, when I can see the king."

Mr. Coventry would not say a word to disturb this confident faith in the king's sense of justice and honor; but he resolved not to lose sight of the family, for he strongly surmised they would be glad to receive other help than the king's before long; for, whatever their right might be, Aylmer Court had doubtless been disposed of long ago, if it had not been seized by the king's brother, the Duke of York, in which case their chances of regaining it were equally remote.

He was relieved from the awkward silence that followed by the entrance of the doctor from the inner room.

Young Aylmer jumped up instantly to meet him.

"What do you think of my sister?" he said, eagerly.

"She lives, and that is all I can say at present," said the doctor, gravely. "I will see her again in a few hours, and bring another chirurgeon with me—one who is skilled in cases of accident."

"Thank you; let no expense be spared;

Mr. Coventry will explain. You will understand that we can pay for all my sister needs," said young Aylmer, in a dignified tone.

But Mrs. Aylmer looked up in surprise. "My dear Launcelot, have you received news from Whitehall?" she asked.

"Not yet, mother; but I am going to the king to-morrow: this accident will brook no delay. Bessie must be moved to Aylmer Court as speedily as possible."

The doctor and Mr. Coventry exchanged glances.

"Your sister must remain here for the present," said the chirurgeon, taking up his hat. "I could not sanction her removal for some weeks, at least; but I will take care that she has every attention that her case demands; and she could scarce be better placed, for you have a fine view of the river," he added, waving his hat toward the window.

"That will enable them to rest content for a few weeks, where, if I mistake not, they will have to live many years," said the doctor to his companion, when they had gained the street. "You heard what I said about the outlook from their window? Depend upon it they will have no other, if it rests with King Charles and his sense of justice."

"Don't let them hear you say so. I like that young Aylmer. I hope he wont waste the best years of his life waiting for what may never come. But what do you think of the girl—will she live?"

"I'm afraid she will," said the doctor, seriously.

"Afraid she will!" repeated his companion. "But if she lives—"

"'Twill be little better than death in life, I fear. I'm afraid her spine is so seriously injured that she will never walk again."

"Dear heart, to think that people's senseless folly should cause such mischief as that!" exclaimed Mr. Coventry. "Why, 'twas but the falling of a little loose mortar, and some senseless wight exclaimed, 'The walls are falling!' and every body seemed bereft of their senses in a minute. Mr. Baxter stood still in the pulpit, and tried to assure them there was no danger; but this girl and some others flung themselves headlong over the gallery."

"And she must have fallen on her back across the edge of a pew. I hope I may be wrong, but I'll take Burton down to see her by and by, and hear his opinion."

The kind-hearted doctor was as good as his

word, and, before night-fall, took his friend to the Blue Boar to see the injured girl.

She had regained consciousness, but had no power to move her lower limbs, and the doctors impressed upon her the necessity of keeping perfectly quiet, and not trying to move at present. They examined her carefully, but she seemed to have received no other injury but this to her back, which they feared would prove quite incurable.

It would not do to tell her so at once, however, and the doctor told Mrs. Aylmer how to prepare some herb tea, and gave her some medicine he had brought with him. But he took care to close the little bedroom door as he came into the sitting-room, and, beckoning young Aylmer to the low bow-window overlooking the river, he said: "You are going to try and gain an audience of King Charles to-morrow?"

The young man blushed and glanced at his shabby dress, for his mother had been impressing upon him the impossibility of his going to court until his wardrobe could be suitably replenished.

"I—I did think of doing so," he said, in some confusion.

"Then do it by all means, if possible; for I think it best to tell you, although you must

for the present keep this a secret from your mother and sisters, but I greatly fear your sister's spine is hopelessly injured."

"You mean, if we were rich she might—"

"I mean," said the doctor, calmly, "that if she were the infanta herself all the doctors in Europe could do nothing that would cure her. Mind, she must not know this yet: the knowledge will come to her gradually as time goes on; and meanwhile I will come and see that her general health does not fail. But after what I heard from Mr. Coventry this morning I thought it my duty to tell you at once, for an invalid requires many little comforts those in health can dispense with. In short, Mr. Aylmer, it will not do to wait much longer for the king to right you. Put it to the test at once, and if the king cannot help you to your own again, then let other friends do what they can for you."

The young man's face flushed at the implied doubt of his majesty's willingness to see that justice was done to his old friends.

"It is but the question of a doublet, I know," he said; "and his majesty could not always go in such brave attire as he now has. I will prepare a letter to-night to present to his majesty myself to-morrow. I will trust it

to no other hand, for I feel certain we have an enemy about the court who has taken care that our letters should never be seen by the king. I would that I knew who it was, for it embittered my father's last days, and, doubtless, shortened his life."

"Well, well, take the letter yourself to-morrow, and may you succeed; but if you do not, then you must let other friends help you."

"But we have no other friends at present," said the young man. "No one who knew us at Aylmer Court has heard of our return to England—how could we let them know we were living in such a place as this?" And he glanced round at the faded serge hangings on the wall and the poverty-stricken furniture of the room.

"You have more friends, perhaps, than you wot of," said the doctor, pleasantly; and, taking up his hat, he joined his friend, who was waiting for him near the door, and the two doctors took their departure.

CHAPTER II.

AT WHITEHALL.

LAUNCELOT AYLMER sat up nearly all night writing a letter to the king, which he determined to carry himself to the palace next day, and place in the king's hand, feeling sure that all his other missives had miscarried.

He left home soon after daylight, but, early as it was, he found the neighborhood of Whitehall astir with gayly-dressed ladies and gentlemen, among whom he felt more shabby than ever; and it was plain that others thought the same, for when he ventured to approach the palace gates he was ordered away by the guard, who threatened to arrest him if he came near again. He had foreseen some such difficulty as this, and knew that his only chance of getting the letter into the king's hands would be to present it when he was passing from the palace to his coach or barge, which always lay in readiness at the water-gate close by; and he thought, by mingling with

the crowd, he should hear what the king's movements were likely to be.

To his great surprise he presently met the gentlemen who had brought the doctor to see his sister the day before, not in a plain black velvet doublet, such as he then wore, but in a dress that proclaimed him to be an officer of state in the Admiralty. He recognized Launcelot in a moment, and, taking his hand, drew him aside from the crowd.

"I am glad to see you here," he said. "You have brought a letter for the king, I suppose?"

"Yes; and I wish to present it to his majesty myself," said Launcelot. "I shall then know beyond a doubt that it is not kept from him by any unknown enemy."

"Well, I think I can help you to do so. The king is going by water to the Tower presently, and I will speak to the guard at the water-gate to let you present your letter as the king descends the steps. You have chosen a fortunate time to present it, for I have just heard that Parliament has agreed to allow him twelve hundred thousand pounds a year; and many petitions are now being considered by Parliament for the restoration of the estates of the king's friends."

"A hundred thousand pounds a month," repeated Launcelot; "what will he do with it?"

"Spend it, you may be sure," said Mr. Coventry, with a smile.

"Yes, yes, to be sure. He has many friends, I know, besides ourselves, who gave up all they could for him while he was abroad; and, I doubt not, he is anxious to repay them, at least, if he can do no more. And we ought to present a petition to Parliament, you think, sir, about our restoration to Aylmer Court?"

"Wait now till you hear from the king. The Parliament is anxious to please his majesty in all things, and if he—"

"I see, I see, sir," said Launcelot, quickly. "If the king recommends it, the thing will be done. This is what I have asked in my letter —that we may receive our own again. I knew not that his majesty had so much money at command, or I might have reminded him that our mother's jewels, our last possession, were sold to the Amsterdam merchants to supply his need; but, doubtless, he will remember this, and send for me to court at once."

"Perhaps he may," said Mr. Coventry. "If he should, you will need a suitable dress, and you may go to my tailor, and tell him to sup-

ply you with a velvet doublet and shoulder-knots, silken hose and buckled shoes, and all things necessary for a gentleman to appear at court; and Mr. William Coventry will be answerable for all charges."

"Thank you, sir, a thousand times; but I shall be able to pay all charges an the king only gets my letter," said Launcelot, who felt assured their troubles were at an end, now that the way had been cleared for him to present his letter to the king in person.

Mr. Coventry gave him his tailor's name and address in Fleet Street, and spoke to the guard at the water-gate, and then left Launcelot to his own reflections.

Pleasant as these were, however, they were not without alloy; for as he thought how soon they would all be going back to Aylmer Court, the vision of his father dying in that miserable home in Flanders, wanting almost the necessaries of life, made his thoughts grow very bitter against his unknown enemy, whoever he might be. A little timely help when the king first came over to England would have saved his father's life, he felt sure; and so he who withheld his letters from the king was no less than a murderer, he argued. He paid but little attention to the gossip

going on around him, although, as the crowd increased, he could not help hearing opinions exchanged about the Act of Uniformity, which was now being debated in Parliament, and the reform of the Prayer Book, which was occupying the attention of Convocation. These things mattered little to Launcelot, although to some of the speakers in the crowd they seemed to be of vital importance.

"'Tis whispered that the king's chaplain, Mr. Baxter, will not accept the new Prayer Book, and will not preach again until after St. Barthoiomew's Day, that other parsons may know what he is going to do."

"And think you many will follow his example?" asked another.

"Nay, I know not; but 'twill be a sorry day for England an they do. 'Tis whispered that all who have been ordained by the late presbytery, instead of by a bishop, will have to seek fresh ordination, as well as accept the new Prayer Book."

"Hey, man, but will they do that—will they avow and declare that they were not competent to baptize and marry, all the years they have been doing it?"

The question was asked very anxiously, and presently the speaker added: "I have two little

ones lying in All-Hallows church-yard, that were baptized by Dr. Bates, of St. Dunstan's; but if he needs must be re-ordained, are my little ones verily and truly baptized, or are they—"

But at this moment there was a movement in the crowd, and Launcelot found himself in danger of being hustled to the back; so he pushed his way nearer the guard again, and so lost the conclusion the anxious father had arrived at, should Dr. Bates decide to conform to the new Act, and seek re-ordination.

Presently the crowd near the palace gates raised a shout, which was speedily taken up all along the line, and "The king! the king!" passed from lip to lip, and every body pressed forward to catch a glimpse of his majesty and the ladies and gentlemen of his court. Launcelot held his letter with trembling fingers, as he gazed at Charles in his splendid suit of ruby velvet and white satin, slashed with silver lace.

"Now!" whispered the guard in his ear; and, stepping forward, Launcelot fell on one knee before the king, and humbly presented his missive.

"Who have we here?" asked Charles, pausing for an instant at the top of the steps.

"Your majesty hath, doubtless, forgotten us—I am Launcelot Aylmer."

A frown contracted the king's brow for an instant, and he looked as though he was about to return the letter; but after a moment's hesitation he thrust it into his pocket and passed on, without deigning to cast another look at Launcelot, kneeling at the side of the pathway. The ladies following immediately behind the king looked at him curiously as they passed, for Launcelot felt so overcome at the king's strange reception of his letter that he could not rise for a minute or two, and the splendid procession had well-nigh passed before he could turn and mingle with the crowd again.

"Some one has poisoned the king's mind against us, I am certain," said Launcelot, bitterly, as he slowly turned his steps toward the Strand; and as he walked along this fashionable thoroughfare, where most of the nobility lived, he mused over this, wondering who, among the few people they had known in Flanders, could have slandered them to his majesty.

"Could it be that wretch Oaklands? I always suspected him of being a Roundhead in disguise—a spy sent by the caitiff Cromwell to watch the king and his friends. He took

Rosalind away from us, I know—poor Cousin Rosalind! She believed him to be a saint, but I fear she has had a terrible awakening from her delusion ere this. I wonder where she is now! I would that I had the wretch Oaklands here; I would wring the secret from him, and then grasp him by the throat until he fell dead at my feet!" and Launcelot ground his teeth in the bitterness of his impotent rage.

The sight of the tailor's shop where Mr. Coventry had told him to order his court dress, and the importunities of the noisy apprentices plying their master's trade, put an end to these thoughts.

"Buy a doublet, sir, or a fine lawn shirt, a hat with the richest feathers in London town?" asked one saucy urchin, while at the same time he made signs and grimaces to his fellow-apprentices to look at Launcelot's threadbare, shabby appearance. When he had run through the list of articles sold by his master, the apprentice from the next booth fastened himself upon his prey. "Buy a horologue, sir? You'll want to know the time when you go to court." The idea of Launcelot going to court seemed to be considered a good joke, and a burst of laughter followed from the other apprentices.

Launcelot felt annoyed, but knew that it was useless to complain, and he would have to put up with the same annoyance until he reached home now, for he had passed Temple Bar, and this was the usual behavior of city 'prentices.

But he was unexpectedly relieved from the vexation of being told that he looked like a very shabby, broken-down gentleman, for there was a sudden far-off cry of "Clubs! clubs!" proclaiming that a fight was in progress; and the cry was instantly taken up and re-echoed down the street, while every 'prentice lad darted into the shop he was in charge of, and seized a stick that lay handy, and rushed off in the direction whence the cry of "Clubs!" was heard. Masters came grumbling to their doors, but they might grumble; not a lad could be induced to stay at his post when that cry was raised, and they were flying up Fleet Street now, flourishing their sticks, and crying "Clubs! clubs!" to Launcelot's great relief, for he might hope to escape any further reminder of his uncomfortable position.

It would be at an end soon now, he hoped; but even as he thought of this came the chilling recollection of the king's frown when he heard his name, and his instant change of behavior, so different from his pleasant affability;

and Launcelot wondered whether he ought to tell his mother of this, or whether he should simply tell her he had succeeded in placing his letter in the king's hand, and allow her to hope for the best, as he should do, if he had not seen the ominous change in the king's countenance.

But before he reached home he was again painfully reminded of his poverty, by seeing the stalls set out with smoking ribs of beef and fresh salads, and men in clean white aprons, crying, "Hot boiled beef!" "Hot sheep's feet!" "Hot calves' liver!" It made Launcelot feel more hungry to see and smell these appetizing dainties—not that he would have stopped and eaten them here, even if he had had a pocketful of gold pieces; but it reminded him painfully of the meager fare they had at home, and made him wish he could take some little dainty with him for Bessie, and for her sake he wished he could feel more assured as to their future good fortune.

When he reached home, and saw the coarse breakfast of rye bread and ale set out on a fine damask table-cloth, with silver-rimmed drinking-horns, and his mother sitting at work darning a fine lawn shirt, the contrast seemed so painful, that it was with difficulty he main-

tained his composure. He tried to greet her with a cheerful smile, but the eager, watchful mother saw the effort it cost him, and the tears slowly welled into her eyes, as she said: "You have failed again, my son?"

"Nay, not so, my mother," said Launcelot, trying to throw off his gloomy thoughts. "By the kindness of Mr. Coventry, who brought the doctor to Bessie on Sunday, I was able to place my letter in the king s hand."

"You gave it to him yourself? O, Launcelot, I am thankful!" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer, smiling through her tears.

But his sister Audrey, who had just entered the room, was impatient for details. "How did the king look? What did he say? Did he ask after me and Bessie? Did you tell him I had learned to play the lute he brought me?"

"My dear, you forget he has other things to think about than girls and their lutes. He is really and actually the King of England now, you know."

"So he was before, mother," replied Audrey. "You and my father always said so, and taught us to pray for King Charles the Second, banished by wicked men from his home and realm."

"Yes; but he had no cares of state then, as he now has," said her mother.

"Does he let these things trouble him thus, do you think? My father used to say he feared the king cared for little but pleasure, and so I thought—"

"Hush, hush, little traitor!" interrupted her brother; "don't you know the king can do no wrong?"

"O, can't he? I'm glad of that, because, you know, when he brought me and Cousin Rosalind our lutes, Sir Harry Oakland said—"

"Hush, Audrey; I never want to hear any thing Sir Harry Oaklands said," commanded her brother, in a stern tone. "I fear you have been too free with your tongue, if you have told him every thing you may have heard talked of at home."

Mrs. Aylmer saw that something had occurred to disturb Launcelot, and so, to turn the conversation, she said: "The king may send for you to go to court to-day, my son: have you thought of that?"

"Mr. Coventry did, mother, and gave me leave to order whatever was needful at his tailor's, and he would be chargeable."

"It was kind; but you told him it was not needful, did you not, my son? The motto of

the Aylmers has always been, 'Owe no man any thing,' you know."

"Yes, I know our proud boast, and do not fear I shall forget it now. But still I may find it needful to use Mr. Coventry's name with this tailor, until we obtain some payment from the king," said Launcelot.

"You will not need a shirt," said Mrs. Aylmer, holding up the fine full lawn garment she was carefully darning.

"But I must have a new doublet," said Launcelot, looking at the threadbare, shabby one he wore.

"Yes, and breeches and boots," said his mother.

"And a hat, with a long feather and silver buckle," put in Audrey, who was delighted at the thought of so much finery coming into the family, even though it was not for herself "Let me go with you to the tailor, and choose your doublet! What shall it be, mother, ruby or purple velvet, and amber satin breeches? Do have amber, Launcelot; it will suit you so well. I wonder what the court ladies will think of you! I must comb out your hair and curl your love-locks for you," said Audrey, skipping across the room to see if Bessie was awake, and to tell her the wonderful news.

"I must turn out my lace to-day, for you must have collar and cuffs to match, and I am not sure that the best are ready to wear," said Mrs. Aylmer, with a little sigh of satisfaction at the thought of seeing her son so fine again. She would have liked to ask when he thought they would be able to go back to Aylmer Court, but somehow he seemed unwilling to say more than he could help, and so she contented herself with talking about the needful preparations for his going to court, and surmising as to how and when the king would send for him.

"Audrey and I will have to go next, I suppose, before we leave London; but we shall have to bring Bessie up again from Aylmer, for I am afraid she will not be able to go with us for some time."

"I am afraid not," said Launcelot, resolutely cutting another slice of rye bread. "How is she now, mother?"

"She don't complain of any pain, but she can't move her legs yet, at least I told her not to try, as the doctor ordered; and she said she had no wish to move, which makes me think she cannot," said Mrs. Aylmer, a little anxiously.

Launcelot took a drink of the poor flat ale,

to hide his emotion; but as he set down the silver-rimmed horn he said: "You must not let her try to move yet, mother; the doctor told me last night it would be dangerous."

"Did he tell you how long she was likely to be ill?" asked his mother, eagerly.

Launcelot shook his head. "He said we must not think of moving her for some weeks."

"It is so unfortunate!" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer. "What shall we do if Audrey and I have to go to court from such a place as this?" and she looked at the dilapidated room, and almost groaned at the thought of it.

CHAPTER III.

A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.

MRS. AYLMER spent the whole day in turning over her store of point lace collars and ruffs, and preparing them for Launcelot to wear, and so to her the time did not seem leaden-footed; neither was she at all anxious that no messenger came from Whitehall to summon Launcelot to attend the king. But Launcelot himself grew very anxious as the hours went on, and no notice was taken of his letter; for he could not forget that ominous frown on the king's face, and he wondered what he should do next if his letter was ignored. Something he must do, or his mother and sisters would soon starve, and he resolved to go and see Mr. Coventry in a day or two, if no message came from the king.

He went to sit with his sister Bessie during the afternoon, while Audrey helped her mother, and he could not help her seeing he was very anxious as to the result of his errand to Whitehall.

"You fear we shall not go back to Alymer court, don't you, Launce?" she asked, fixing her earnest blue eyes upon her brother.

"I know whose fault it will be if we don't!" replied Launcelot, fiercely.

"Hush! we must not say a word against the king. You have often told Audrey that, you know."

"I was not thinking of the king, but of the man who has poisoned the king's mind against us, Bessie. I have not said a word to mother, but I am certain we have an enemy at court."

Bessie looked into her brother's troubled, anxious face. "Why should any body be our enemy?" she said. "The king knows us so well, too, he is not likely to listen to any idle tale."

"You don't know any thing about the intrigues of a court, and how the king has to listen to all sorts of people and all sorts of tales."

"But he is not obliged to believe what he hears. Do you remember when the king went with us to see that poor old man who was almost dying, and yet so joyful and content in his poverty? He told the king to seek the holy Light while he was in exile, and it would help him to govern truly if ever he was called

to the English throne; and if not, it would lead him where he would see the face of God."

"I'm afraid the king did not pay much attention to such instructions as that," said her brother.

"Perhaps not; but I have been thinking of it all night, Launce. The old man did not notice me, but I have never forgotten his words; and if I could only see this holy Light that made his life so happy and blessed, I don't think I should mind much about any thing else."

These words struck Launcelot like a blow. He had nerved himself to disbelieve the doctor's words about the hopelessness of Bessie's recovery, but now they returned to him with almost a conviction of their truth. "Don't, don't, Bessie!" he said; "I can't bear it yet;" and he lifted his hands, as though the sad truth had taken bodily shape, and he would push it away from him.

"Why, Launce, what do you mean?" asked his sister, in surprise; "we have talked about this before, you and I, and we agreed to seek this holy Light. You remember the old man said, 'He lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' only man hid it by worldliness

and selfishness; and we must fight against these, and conquer these, that the Light may shine forth in us; for we cannot see it ourselves, unless others see it in us. We thought it a great mystery at first, you know, and—"

"Don't, Bessie dear; let us talk about something else now. When we get to Aylmer Court, you know we agreed we must get our affairs settled first, and then, like the knight of old who set out to search for the holy Cross, we will begin our quest for the holy Light."

"But suppose the king cannot give us Aylmer Court again?" said Bessie, in a whisper.

"Then in justice he will give us something else. He could give me a piece of court preferment, and make you and Audrey maids of honor to the new queen, and—"

"I am afraid we should not have much time to seek for the holy Light in the bustle of a life at court," said Bessie, quickly.

"But we are not sure that you will go to court, you know. If we get our own again, I am almost sure that mother will prefer to live at Aylmer, and then in the quiet country there will be nothing to hinder our quest."

"O! I should like to see dear old Aylmer

again. I wonder whether those dreadful Roundheads have altered it much!" said Bessie.

"Turned it all into a big farm, I dare say; mother's rose garden into a poultry yard, perhaps, and your bower into a cattle shed," said Launcelot, in a bitter tone.

"How nice it will be to alter it all back again!" said Bessie; "and we can make the terrace to the rose garden, that every body said it wanted, to make it perfect. How did the king look this morning?" she suddenly asked, by way of turning the conversation.

"Tall and dark, as usual," said her brother. "You know he is not very handsome, and when he frowns—well, if he was not King Charles, we should say he looked downright ugly."

"And he frowned at you?" said Bessie, in quick, anxious tone.

"I didn't say so, little inquisitor."

"No—but—it wasn't like the king to frown at you. I thought he would have said, 'Odd's fish, Aylmer, are you in London?' and made you go with him, shabby as you were."

"So did I," said Launcelot; "and I confess to you, Bessie, though I have not told mother or Audrey, that I'm greatly disappointed, and that is why I fear we have an enemy at court."

"But who could it be? who would try to harm us with the king?"

"Sir Harry Oaklands would," promptly replied Launcelot. "He took Rosalind away from us, and—"

"I don't believe it, Launce," said Bessie, quickly. "Rosalind's head was turned by the king bringing her and Audrey a lute, and she fretted about our poverty so much, that I believe she was willing to go anywhere with any body who could offer her a change."

"And he took advantage of her poverty and ignorance," said Launcelot, through his clenched teeth.

"I don't believe it was Sir Harry Oaklands," said Bessie; "I don't think he would do such a thing."

"Who else could it have been?" demanded her brother. "Bessie, I believe the trouble about Rosalind, and the miserable life we led in Flanders, killed my father; and that man is as surely his murderer as though he had struck him down with the sword, and—"

"O, Launce, don't say such dreadful things!" exclaimed Bessie, in a distressed voice, for the tone in which the words were spoken, and the look that accompanied them, filled her with an undefined dread, and she

almost hoped that the king was offended, that her brother might not go to court to meet Sir Harry.

That day passed, and the next, and no messenger came from Whitehall; and Mrs. Aylmer began to grow fidgety, lest in the bustle of preparation for the arrival of the new queen, they should be forgotten.

"I think you had better get the new suit and go to court, without waiting any longer, Launcelot," she said, on the third day. "The new queen has left Portugal, I hear; and so the king will go to meet her shortly, and then—Yes, my son, you must try and see the king before she comes," added the lady, more decidedly, "for I should like Audrey to have a place in her household; it gives a lady some standing to be connected with the court."

"Well, mother, I scarcely thought you would care to send the girls to court, knowing what you do about the king; and gossip says he is no better now than he was abroad."

"But it will be different when he is married; and, besides, she would be in the queen's household. Do go and see the king again!" said his mother; "Audrey is so anxious to go to court."

"Well, mother, I have been thinking I would go and see Mr. Coventry, and ask him to get me speech of the king again. I have found out that he is secretary to the Duke of York, who is Lord Admiral of England; and so he is doubtless often with the king, and could say a word for me to his majesty."

"I cannot understand how it is the king has not sent for you, now he knows you are in England. He was free enough when we were in Flanders," said Mrs. Aylmer.

"Ah! the king in Flanders and the king in England scarcely seem like the same person, mother," said Launcelot.

"Well, I never forgot the respect due to his majesty, and that he was King of England, when his doublet was as frayed as yours is now, and he was often at his wits' end for a meal."

It was useless to pursue the painful topic any further, and Launcelot decided to walk to the Navy Office at once, and make inquiries concerning Mr. Coventry. As secretary to the admiral, he would necessarily be known in the naval department, and Launcelot preferred going direct to his public office than waiting about Whitehall or St. James's Palace for a chance interview. Judging from what he had

already seen of the gentlemau, he thought he was so kindly disposed, that he had only to make his request known, and Mr. Coventry would at once promise to gain him an audience. In this, however, he was mistaken. He was at the Navy Office when Launcelot called; but the moment his eye fell upon the shabby velvet doublet, he knew that for some reason Charles did not want the young man at court, whatever his claims might be; and he had ascertained, too, that Aylmer court was about to pass into the possession of his master, the Duke of York, and, therefore, such a claimant as Launcelot was not likely to be welcome either to the king or his brother. So he met Launcelot with rather a curt greeting.

"The king has not sent for you yet, young man, I suppose?" he said, turning over some papers that lay on the table before him.

"Not yet; and it was to ask your good offices with the king that I came to see you," said Launcelot, quickly.

"You want me to—to—" and Coventry paused.

"To present me to his majesty. I know, if I could see him, I could disabuse his mind of any doubt concerning us; and it is needful

I should press my claim for Aylmer Court at once."

Launcelot spoke earnestly and eagerly, the more so that Mr. Coventry seemed to be giving but scant attention to him. In this, however, he was mistaken. Mr. Coventry was giving every attention to what Launcelot said, and wondering how he should get himself out of a disagreeable predicament. It would not be agreeable either to the king or the Duke of York to be pestered about the Aylmer inheritance, now that it had come into the latter's possession; and so he was wondering what he could do to put off Launcelot in a civil way, until he could sound Charles as to his intention toward the family. If the king intended to acknowledge their claims, it would not do to offend a man who might by and by be a friend of the king; but neither, on the other hand, would it answer his purpose to befriend any body obnoxious to his majesty, and so at last he laid aside his papers, and said:

"But you cannot go to court as you are. Did you go to my tailor's about the doublet and breeches?"

"No; I have been waiting for the king to summon me to Whitehall," answered Launce-

lot, "for I did not doubt but the tailor could fit me with all things needful in an hour."

"Well, go and get them to-day, at my charge, and come here again to-morrow; and if the king is pleased to receive you, we will go at once to Whitehall."

So Launcelot went home greatly elated at the thought of so soon seeing the king; while Mr. Coventry decided to ask the king with some caution if he knew these Aylmers, and to be guided by his answer whether he should give Launcelot any facility for seeing Charles. He was to accompany the Duke of York to Whitehall that afternoon, to make the final arrangements about the escort to be sent to meet the Princess of Portugal, the future queen, and at this interview he would contrive to say a word to the king about Launcelot. But Charles, who thought every minute wasted that was given to the most necessary business instead of pleasure, cut short his explanation as to how he had met with the Aylmers by saying:

"Odd's fish, don't worry me about churches and wenches; give the fellow something to do in your office, or tell Pepys to take him."

Now Mr. Coventry was making a handsome

fortune by the sale of all appointments, so he was not best pleased to be told he must give one of these to Launcelot, and decided to send him to Mr. Pepys, Secretary to the Admiralty, who could give him a small clerkship in his department Meanwhile Launcelot had been to the tailor's, and got himself fitted with a handsome court suit of purple velvet and satin, with a broad-brimmed hat and long white ostrich feather, which, with the fine lawn shirt and lace collar and ruffs his mother had got ready, made him look as fine a gentleman as any in London.

Audrey was in raptures over her brother's finery, although she was greatly disappointed that her advice about the amber satin breeches had not been taken, and Launcelot had chosen such sober colors for his first court suit. She insisted upon curling his hair herself that morning, and truly his long, flowing chestnut locks, falling on the broad point lace collar, did her deft fingers justice; and Mrs. Aylmer shed tears of motherly pride as she looked at her handsome son, and thought how pleased the king would be to welcome him to court.

For economy's sake, it was decided that he should go by water from Paul's Wharf to the

Tower Stairs, as a coach would be too expensive for their slender means, and he could not walk through the city without exciting too many remarks from the saucy apprentices; but in the neighborhood of the Tower he would not be remarked, for the king and his court often went there, and the Navy Office was not far off; so there was no difficulty to encounter on the score of his fine clothes in that neighborhood, any more than there would have been at Whitehall.

Of course his court dress gained him admission to the Navy Office almost without a question being asked, and he was obsequiously bowed to Mr. Coventry's room, and asked to wait until that gentleman arrived. While sitting there, Launcelot amused himself by thinking how differently the world was treating him already, and that for his mother and sisters in future there would be smiles instead of frowns; for he had felt certain of attaining his ancestral home, now that Mr. Coventry had undertaken to introduce him to the king. When that gentleman arrived, he rose to greet him with an easy grace, which Coventry chose to ignore. He looked cross and out of temper, and muttered something about "fine feathers" as he took his seat.

Launcelot could only stare in blank amazement for a minute or two at this unexpected reception, but he managed to say, at last:

"Have you spoken to the king for me?"

"Yes; and he bid me send you to Mr. Pepys, who will find you some appointment in his office."

"But—but I was to see the king to-day," said Launcelot, in amazement.

"The king is too busy over matters concerning the arrival of the queen;" and, summoning an attendant, Coventry cut short the interview by saying, "Show this gentleman to Mr. Pepys's office," and turned to the papers on the table without a word.

"Who is Mr. Pepys?" asked Launcelot, who had never heard the name before.

"He is Secretary to the Admiralty; his office is close by, sir," said the attendant.

Launcelot followed the man, but found that Mr. Pepys was not in his office. The clerk thought he had gone home.

"He lives in Seething Lane, hard by St. Olave's Church, sir," explained the attendant, who thought Launcelot was some nobleman come on business for the king, and treated him with all due deference. "You will not

need a coach, sir," he added, seeing Launcelot hesitate.

"Thank you. I don't think I shall have any need to see Mr. Pepys," said Launcelot; and he turned away in the direction of the Tower, stunned and bewildered by this sudden overthrow of his hopes. It was clear now that the king did not intend to see him or acknowledge his claim to the family estate; and his heart grew very bitter as he thought of the poverty at home, and how wealth and honor and life had been given up by his father in the service of the king.

CHAPTER IV.

MARY MAITLAND.

LAUNCELOT had scarcely left home, and the room was still in disorder; for Audrey had curled his hair in the sitting-room, and various collars and ruffs had been tried on there, and those that had been discarded lay scattered on the table beside hair-brushes and combs and pomades; since, instead of putting these things away, Audrey had run to the window to try and catch a glimpse of her brother as the waterman pushed off into the stream. She was still standing there, straining her eyes to see the effect of the handsome purple velvet doublet and point lace collar, when there came a gentle knock at the door, and, on opening it, Audrey saw a young lady about her own age, only tall and stately-looking, but dressed so primly and plainly that at first she was inclined to think she must be a servant.

"Good-morrow," said her visitor, in a sweet, musical voice. We have heard of the sad

accident that happened last Sunday to some one living here, and I have brought a posy of sweet flowers—God's messengers of love and good cheer."

"Will you walk in?" said Audrey, casting a rueful glance at the untidy room, and trying to be as stately and self-composed as this Puritan maiden; for Audrey had settled that point in her own mind—she was one of these Puritan Roundheads, and as such there could be little more than the coldest civility between them, any more than there was between the Jews and Samaritans of old; but she could scarcely send her and her flowers away without telling her mother and Bessie, for her sister was so fond of flowers, and Audrey was secretly longing to snatch them from her hand and run with them to Bessie's room at once. But, although the flowers had been offered to her, Audrey would not touch them. The smoothly-banded hair under the plain hood, and the simple white handkerchief folded across her breast, proclaimed all too surely that this sweet-faced, gentle-voiced girl was one of their enemies; and Audrey half expected her mother would say she had done wrong in inviting such a guest to enter their home.

Whether Mrs. Aylmer would have done this or not it is hard to say, for Bessie took the matter out of their hands by exclaiming, "You say she is a stranger come to bring me flowers? How very kind! Do ask her to come and see me;" and Mrs. Aylmer signing her assent to this proposal, Audrey returned and asked their visitor to walk into Bessie's room.

"I was so sorry to hear you had been hurt in the church," she said, as she stepped forward and placed the flowers in Bessie's hands.

"You are very kind," murmured Mrs. Aylmer, glancing first at Bessie's delighted gaze at the flowers, and then at her visitor's suspiciously plain dress; but at the same time she placed a chair near the bedside for her, and the visitor sat down.

"It is, indeed, kind of you to bring these lovely flowers to me, a stranger," said Bessie.

"Well, I am so fond of flowers myself—they seem like God's letters to us, I think—and I thought you were ill, and he would want you to remember that it was out of the fullness of his loving-kindness that he had afflicted you just now."

This was said in such a natural tone that no one could doubt the speaker fully believed

what she said. Mrs. Aylmer did not look best pleased, however, and would have liked to say that it had happened at a most inconvenient time; but she saw that Bessie looked pleased and interested, and so she left them to themselves, while she went to look after Audrey.

"She is a Puritan, I feel sure, mother," said Audrey, in a whisper, as her mother closed Bessie's door.

"Very likely," said Mrs. Aylmer; "but Bessie was so pleased with the flowers I could not tell her to take them back."

"I don't like Puritans; but she looks like a lady, mother," said Audrey, as she gathered up the implements of her brother's toilet off the table.

"Yes, she does," assented Mrs. Aylmer; "but it matters little to us who she is or what she is, for we are not likely to meet her when we go to Aylmer Court."

"Then you will let her come and see Bessie again, I suppose?"

"Certainly, if Bessie wishes it. I think it may do her good to have a little change of society now, and this girl will amuse her, I have no doubt. Did you see Launcelot in the boat?" asked Mrs. Aylmer, returning to a more congenial topic of conversation.

"O yes. He will make a splendid court gallant, mother. I wonder whether the king will recognize him at once? I wonder whether he would know me if I went to court in a splendid satin train and with twenty patches on my face?"

"I don't like patches," said Mrs. Aylmer; "and I hope the new queen will set another fashion when she comes."

"But my Lady Castlemaine wears patches, and—"

"Audrey, how dare you mention Lady Castlemaine's name to me?" interrupted her mother, in a displeased tone.

The girl hung her head, but said, by way of excuse, that she had seen her sitting with the king in the royal barge when on their way to Greenwich. "And every body is talking about her and the king," she added.

Mrs. Aylmer sighed. "I am glad the king is to be married so soon," she said; "it will put an end to all these scandals, and the court will speedily be reformed."

"And then you think patches will go out of fashion?" said Audrey, who was longing to try the effect of black plaster on her fair face.

"I hope so," said Mrs. Aylmer, shortly.

"But they might wear devices cut out of the patchment. Launcelot saw a lady with a coach and horses on her forehead the day he went to Whitehall. I should like that, I think, better than the patches. I wonder how long it will be before I go to Greenwich in a royal barge!" sighed Audrey.

Meanwhile the two girls, left to themselves, were rapidly making each other's acquaintance. After a little conversation about the accident in St. Dunstan's Church Bessie told her visitor they were Royalists just returned from exile to claim the family estate, and that her brother had gone that day to see the king at Whitehall to commence the necessary business. Then her visitor told Bessie her name was Mary Maitland, that her father was the lecturer or curate of a neighboring church, and they lived at the vicarage close by; that she was the eldest child, and the sister-mother to four younger brothers and sisters, and that she helped her father in his parish work by visiting some of the sick poor of the neighborhood.

"Mr. Baxter came to see us last night and told us all about the fright in the church, and that one of those who had been most seriously hurt lived at the sign of the Blue Boar, near

Paul's Wharf," explained Mary; "and I said I would make inquiries about you to-day."

"It is very kind of you," said Bessie, "and I hope you will come and see me again—come as often as you can while we are here."

"You will not be here long, you think!" said Mary, in a questioning tone.

"We hope not; we hope to go to our old home in the country very soon. O, I hope we shall go, for Launcelot's sake!" suddenly exclaimed Bessie. "Launcelot is my brother," she went on, "and we agreed a long time ago —my brother and I—that we would seek the holy Light when once our affairs were settled; and, since I have been lying here, I have wanted to begin so much, but Launcelot thinks we must wait until we get to Aylmer Court."

"What do you mean by the holy Light?" asked Mary, thinking this must be something new of which she had not heard before.

Bessie looked surprised at the question. "I thought you would be sure to know all about it, after what you said concerning the flowers just now," she remarked. "Is not Christ the Light of the world; the Light that lighteth every one of us, if we will listen to the holy voice within, and follow in his footsteps?"

"But why should you wait until you go into

the country to seek God?" said Mary. "He is here in London, though I grant you it is a marvelous wicked city, more especially since the court—" But there Mary paused, suddenly remembering that, as a Royalist, Bessie could not be expected to view the king and his doings from the same stand-point that she did; and so she wisely said, "Each of us helps to swell the sins of this great city, but God is as near us here, and as ready to be found of those who truly seek him, as though we dwelt in a solitary place, with no other soul near."

"Yes," said Bessie, slowly, as though she was pondering over the words.

"It was in a crowd, you know, that the woman who had an issue sought and found Jesus; and as many of us have to spend our lives here in London, if it were necessary to go to the country to find pardon and peace with God, I am afraid few would be saved."

"Do you know what this is—this peace with God?" asked Bessie, in a low, eager tone.

"Yes, dear friend, I do; and it is only to be found in Christ—"

"That is what the old man told us," interrupted Bessie. "He said that Jesus Christ was the light of the world, and that if we followed him we should not walk in darkness,

but have the light of life. The gift and grace of God is life and salvation given to all, though few regard it. That was what I was told a long time ago, and that is what I mean by the holy Light. But how am I to seek it? The old man said few regard it, that we put it under the bushel of selfishness and worldliness and sin; and that is just what I have been doing all my life. I feel as though I were dead and buried in sin," added Bessie, mournfully.

"Not dead, dear friend; dead people and dead souls feel nothing—no pain or anxiety as to their state. The very sense of pain, the sorrow you feel, is a proof of life. You may be almost buried in sin, but there are the stirrings of life now; and while there is life there is hope, you know. Hope in God," added Mary.

"You see I never thought any thing about these things, until one day in Flanders a party of us were out in the country, and were obliged to seek shelter in a cottage from a heavy thunder-storm. We found an old man living there alone—an Englishman, and he knew the king, and spoke to him about seeing this holy Light. He did not notice me, but I have never forgotten his words, and Launcelot and I agreed that we would begin; but somehow we seemed

to go on just as usual; but he says we shall begin when we get to Aylmer now."

"But why should you wait until then? Why should you keep God waiting for you?" said Mary, quickly.

"Keep God waiting!" repeated Bessie.

"Yes, dear; he is waiting, he is speaking to you by this inward voice, by the shining of this holy Light that you spoke of just now. He is asking you to come to him, that he may give you more light."

"How shall I go? what shall I do?" asked Bessie. "I would not keep him waiting. I want to obey this holy voice, to seek this holy Light."

"Christ is the way. You say you are buried in sin; he only can take it out of the way. He is the Life stirring in you now, making you long for more life, even the grace of God which passeth all understanding."

"How can I get this peace?" asked Bessie, eagerly, "You see I cannot go to church or do any thing now," she added.

"And God does not desire that you should do any thing. Priests and grand ceremonies are but screens and shadows between the soul and God. Christ is speaking to your soul himself, and he would have you reply to himself, not

through another. You have a Testament, haven't you? You have read Christ's invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?'——rest from sin, and worldliness, and self-seeking—a rest that is almost like heaven below, I have heard my father say."

"I have a Testament somewhere, and I think I remember reading those words. I will ask mother to find it, and read them again," said Bessie. "Will you say them once more? They are very sweet," she added.

"They are the words of the Voice speaking in you now; the loving invitation is the same!" and once more Mary repeated slowly the words that have healed and comforted so many generations of weary, laboring souls.

"But my sins?" said Bessie; "you don't know what a sinner I am."

"But Christ does, and heavy as the load is, he has borne it for you. God knew what the cry of your heart would be, and, in his infinite love and compassion, he sent his Son to die for us, that we might see in this sacrifice of himself how great the love of God is for us. There is no other name or way by which we can be saved but through Christ, and priests and ceremonies are but shadows and hin-

derances." Mary insisted upon this so much, because in her Puritan home she had heard so often of the attempt of Archbishop Laud to introduce a modification of popery into the Church, and the peril of admitting rites and ceremonies, priests or ministers, to come between the individual soul and God; and, guessing that Bessie had been brought up to consider these outward observances all-important in religion, she thought she would throw in a word of caution against placing any dependence in them.

If Mrs. Aylmer had guessed that religion was the subject of conversation between the two girls, she would scarcely have left them to themselves so long; for Puritanism, viewed from her stand point, was any thing but good. To her mind, religion had been most grievously degraded—almost shorn of all decency—during the last few years. The plain, simple, unadorned ritual of the Puritans, in her view, savored of irreverence and impiety; and, recalling what English churches had been, and what the ritual of the Church was becoming under the direction of Laud, she could only feel shocked and repelled whenever she went to church now. For her, therefore, to have heard Mary say that priests and ceremonies

were but shadows hiding God from the soul, would but have provoked her to say that Mary was too young to know what she was talking about, and that it would be best to leave such grave subjects until she could understand them—an admonition that would probably have been followed by a request not to trouble herself to call again, as her children were already well informed upon religious matters, and needed no instruction from a Puritan.

But, fortunately, Mrs. Aylmer had no time to think of what was going on in Bessie's room, for Audrey's chatter about patches, and going to Greenwich in the royal barge, reminded her mother that she might be summoned to court on very short notice after Launcelot had seen the king, and so she decided to turn out her store of old finery, to see if there was not a dress or train that could be made into something suitable for Audrey to wear, for once at least. Of course Audrey was delighted to engage in such a search. To turn out the satin, brocade, velvet, and taffeta dresses in which her mother had appeared at the court of Queen Henrietta Maria, was what she delighted in; and though they were faded and worn and shabby, it pleased her to think

she was now within measurable distance of wearing some of them. She was quite sure that a petticoat and train suitable for her to wear could be made out of these; and with her hair curled, and her face dexterously patched, she would look as fine as any court lady among them.

Her mother smiled and sighed as she thought of all the glory and splendor that the sight of these dresses recalled; but it amused her, as well as Audrey, to turn over the store, and plan and contrive how a rubbed seam could be cut off here, and a faded piece taken out there, and still leave sufficient for a petticoat or train for a slim figure like Audrey.

Mother and daughter were still deep in the consideration of a crimson satin petticoat, when the door of Bessie's room was opened, and Mary Maitland came out. The girl could not help looking in amazement at this display of faded finery—for the room looked now like a cast-off clothes shop — but she was too polite to say more than was necessary.

"Your daughter seems to be very much hurt," she remarked, as she picked her way between the heaps of clothes toward the door.

"Yes; she is ordered to keep quiet for a little while," said Mrs. Aylmer. "Thank you for calling to see her," she added.

"I may call again in a few days, may I not?" asked Mary.

"Yes, certainly, if we are here; but we shall be removing shortly, I hope;" and then Mrs. Aylmer wished her good morning, and returned to Audrey and her work of planning out the petticoats.

CHAPTER V.

LAUNCELOT'S APPOINTMENT.

IT would be difficult to describe the varied emotions raging in Launcelot's breast as he turned from the Navy Office, and walked up Seething Lane in the direction of the Tower. First Mr. Coventry, then Sir Harry Oaklands was the object of his bitter thoughts; but only an occasional flush of resentment did he feel toward the king, and this was instantly checked as savoring of something traitorous.

"Coventry wouldn't take the trouble. He's an ill-natured fellow, after all, I believe," muttered Launcelot, as he drew near the Tower Stairs, and suddenly thought he would take a boat to Whitehall and boldly demand an audience of the king. His dress would give him some advantage to-day, and he would possibly be allowed to pass the gates without question; and once he could see the king, and state his case, their troubles would be over.

"He is so good-natured, he would not refuse to see me, I am sure," murmured Launcelot,

forgetting that this same easy good-nature had often led the king to be unjust as well as generous, and that there was very little reliance to be placed in it if trouble to himself was involved in its exercise.

At last, after thinking over the matter for some time, he resolved to see his mother first, before deciding to force himself upon the king's notice; and so he called a boatman, and was rowed back to Paul's Wharf.

The river was alive now with pleasure boats and barges, some on their way to Deptford, where an entertainment was to be given at Saye Court by Sir John Evelyn; and others, still more splendid, were carrying the court to Greenwich, where the king intended to build a new palace, or add a wing to the old one, for he was almost as fond of this rural retreat as Henry the Eighth had been.

The sight of the royal flotilla, with their gilded prows and silken hangings, of course convinced Launcelot that it would be useless to attempt to gain an audience of the king to-day, and he bade the man row him with all speed to Paul's, for he was anxious to consult with his mother as to his future action; and whatever was decided must be done quickly, for the king would soon be going to Ports-

mouth to meet the Princess of Portugal, to say nothing of their own needy circumstances, that demanded instant relief from some source.

When Launcelot reached home the question of petticoats and trains was still under discussion, and the sight of the faded finery vexed him not a little. Audrey jumped up as soon as he opened the door, and ran forward to greet him.

"How soon you are back! Has the king sent for me?" she asked. "Mother is going to alter—"

"Hush, Audrey!" interposed her mother, now coming forward, for she knew by the look on Launcelot's face that something had gone wrong. "What is it, my son?" she asked, anxiously, as Launcelot dropped into a chair.

"I haven't seen the king," he answered.

"Nor Mr. Coventry? I thought you had arranged to meet him this morning at the Navy Office?" said Mrs Aylmer.

"O! I've seen Coventry; but I don't know what to make of him to-day, his manner toward me was so changed."

Mrs Aylmer, who knew more of courtiers and their manners toward aspirants for royal favor than Launcelot did, turned pale as she heard this. "He would not take you to see

the king as he had promised?" she whispered.

"No; said the king was too busy to receive me."

"Had he mentioned your name to the king?"

"I suppose so. O yes! he must, for the king told him to send me to Mr. Pepys about some appointment,"

"Who is Mr. Pepys?" asked the lady, brightening at the vision of some comfortable sinecure in the royal household, which would take them all at once into the sunshine of the royal presence.

"O! some fellow at the Navy Office," said Launcelot, crossly and contemptuously. It vexed him to see Audrey toying with that faded finery. His own had given him no small pleasure an hour or two before; but he hated the sight of it now, for it seemed a bitter mockery of their destitution; and now how his mother and sister could take pleasure in looking over these mementoes of their past greatness he could not understand.

Mrs. Aylmer divined something of what was passing in his mind, and said: "We thought Audrey's turn to be made fine would come soon, and so we have been looking over my old dresses."

"How is Bessie?" asked Launcelot, by way of turning the conversation.

"O, Bessie has had a visitor this morning," said Audrey, dropping the velvet train she was examining, and turning her attention to her brother. "A Puritan girl brought her some flowers; I know she was a Puritan by her dress, but she might have been a queen for stateliness."

"Not much like you, then, my Royalist sister," said Launcelot, smiling, as Audrey slipped across the room and opened Bessie's door.

"Are you awake?" she asked. "Launce has come back, dear."

"Ask him to come in and tell me all about every thing. Are we going to Aylmer soon?" said Bessie.

"Don't ask him, dear," whispered Audrey. "He hasn't seen the king, and he's dreadfully cross."

"Poor Launce! he's disappointed," said Bessie. "Tell him to come and see me."

Launcelot came in, and sat down on the side of the bed, looking sadly pitiful at the pale face on the pillow.

"Never mind, Launce; if we don't go to Aylmer again, God will take care of us here,"

whispered Bessie, as she toyed with the deep lace ruffle that hung half over the hand that held hers.

"But I must—I will get Aylmer!" said her brother, passionately. "I want it for your sake: you will not have a chance to get well staying here."

"God can give me his peace here," whispered Bessie.

"We'll talk about that some other time," said Launcelot, impatiently; "I didn't see the king this morning, Bessie."

"What is to be done for mother? Audrey says our last gold piece has been changed," said Bessie. "Couldn't you get an appointment, or something, until the king has time to attend to our business?"

Launcelot looked thoughtfully at his sister.

"I might do that while I am waiting, as you say, Bessie. Perhaps that was what the king intended," he suddenly added, his countenance brightening as he spoke, "How stupid of me never to think of it before! Mother," he called, "I think I will go back to the Navy Office at once, and see this Mr. Pepys. I must do something, or we shall all starve; and you may be sure the king has thought of that, and has ordered Mr. Pepys to give me

an appointment until he can attend to our business. We may have to wait until after he is married, as the Princess of Portugal is on her way here, and this is the only thing he can do for us at present."

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Aylmer, who did not like to damp her son's suddenly-revived hope, but could not feel so sanguine about the matter after Mr. Coventry's strange reception, related by Launcelot.

Had the king intended to favor their suit he would not have sent him to Mr. Pepys without sending for him to court first, and Mr. Coventry would not have treated him with such scant ceremony if he had been likely to rise in the king's favor by and by.

She was busy folding and laying by the old court dresses of her youth, and with them went the hopes of seeing her children resplendent in satin and jewels; for she knew all too well that this appointment, whatever it might be, was all they were likely to get from the king.

But Launcelot was full of hope and expectation again now, and scarcely waited for their frugal midday meal to be dispatched, so impatient was he to be back at the Navy Office and see this Mr. Pepys.

It was as well, perhaps, for Launcelot that he had not gone direct to that gentleman after leaving Mr. Coventry; for with no recommendations or special fitness for a clerkship, business-like Mr. Pepys would very likely have dismissed him with the assurance that he had no vacancy in his office. But a conversation that took place while Launcelot was on his way home prepared Mr. Pepys for his visit; and as the king had desired that an appointment should be given him—well, of course, his fitness or capability for the duties required of him would be of secondary importance just now; although Mr. Pepys was not the man to have these slighted, and he did not mean to let the clerkship become a mere sinecure, although he would, of course, treat Launcelot with every consideration while teaching him his duties.

So, when Launcelot presented himself a second time at the Navy Office, and inquired for Mr. Pepys, he found that gentleman fully prepared to receive him, and to give him an appointment at a very fair salary, but which, of course, seemed a mere pittance to Launcelot, who had expected a much more lucrative post. The Secretary of the Navy saw at once the disappointment felt by Launcelot, and

hastened to explain that it was the best post he could offer him. The more lucrative appointments were in another department, under the control of Mr. Coventry, who sold them often to the highest bidder, and for some thousands of pounds.

"If you have money at command, it would be better to purchase one of these appointments," advised Mr. Pepys; "for I must tell you fairly, that if you come to me for this salary, you must earn it. I have to apply myself to the duties of my post, and you must do the same; but I will make them as light as I can for you. Still, if you have money, buy a better."

"Money!" exclaimed Launcelot; "should I be here if I had money? My father was a Royalist gentleman who raised and maintained a company of troopers for the late king, and sold my mother's jewels to keep Charles the Second when he was in exile; and now we have changed the last gold piece, I am offered this pittance fit for a beggar!"

Mr. Pepys felt uncomfortable. He liked to be happy himself, and he liked to make every body else easy and comfortable, and he could not but own that Launcelot's was a very hard case.

"But as things have come to such a pass with you that you have changed the last piece," said practical Mr. Pepys, "would it not be better to accept for the present what the king offers you here, and by and by you may have an opportunity of recommending yourself to the notice of his majesty, and he may give you something better? I can let you have your first quarter's salary to-day, if you wish—it can always be paid in advance."

He did not tell Launcelot that this arrangement could be made through the medium of his own pocket, and he was too ignorant of business to suspect that there was any thing extraordinary in this arrangement. It clinched the matter, however; for the idea of taking home a handful of money to lay in his mother's lap was too tempting to be refused, and he said, slowly, "Thank you; I will come, and I will do my best to give you satisfaction."

"You will not find me hard to please. Will you come to-morrow?" asked Mr. Pepys, preparing a receipt for Launcelot to sign; for every thing was done with methodical precision in the department ruled over by Mr. Pepys.

"Yes; I will be here to-morrow morning," said Launcelot.

"Can you be here by eight o'clock? For I go by water to Deptford with Sir William Penn, vice-admiral of the fleet, to see the ships now going to meet the Princess of Portugal, and I must needs take a clerk to note some matters concerning the appointments and departure of the ships."

While he was speaking Mr. Pepys looked more carefully at Launcelot's dress, and wondered whether he would present himself in a purple velvet doublet and satin breeches, to do the work of a subordinate clerk.

But Launcelot was quite as quick to interpret looks as Mr. Pepys, and he said, "You wish me to come in a different dress to-morrow?" and then he took a more careful survey of his employer's attire, judging that it would be best to follow his example in this particular, even though it should be little better than that of an apprentice.

"Velvet is scarcely fit for the grim and dirt of a ship," said Mr. Pepys, who had only recently worn velvet himself, even on state occasions.

"I understand," said Launcelot; "I will get a broadcloth doublet before to-morrow morning."

He spoke the words easy enough, but it

was by no means so easy to make such a decision; and what his mother would say, when she heard that he had deliberately promised to lay aside what she considered the distinguishing badge of their rank and station, he did not know.

Dress was in those days an outward indication of the rank of the wearer, and an apprentice or citizen would no more think of assuming the dress of a gentleman or nobleman than that of a bishop; and therefore this question of wearing the attire of a clerk was no small matter to Launcelot, and left a bitter sting in his heart.

"It is but another count in the charges I shall one day bring against Oaklands!" he muttered, as he left the Navy Office, and once more turned toward the Tower Stairs.

There was a grim satisfaction in thinking, as he hailed a waterman, that it was the last time he should have to pay toll for wearing a dress becoming his proper rank in society; that another day would see him undistinguished by any mark from the common toilers in London, and he would be able to walk unnoticed through the streets of the city. But there was more pain than pleasure in the thought, and there

was not much elation in his greeting when he went home and laid twenty gold pieces in his mother's hand.

She was so overcome at the sight that she burst into tears; for, although she had carefully concealed the fact that the last had been changed, her heart was full of anxious foreboding as to how their wants were to be supplied when the few shillings that remained had been spent. "That must last us three months, mother," said Launcelot, trying to speak cheerfully.

"Where did you get it?" asked Mrs. Aylmer.

"It is my first quarter's salary, mother. I have taken the appointment offered me by the king."

Mrs. Aylmer looked as though she did not understand. She knew no more of business than her son; but the word "appointment" brought with it to her mind visions of wealth that was very inadequately represented by the twenty gold pieces before her, and she said: "What is this appointment you are speaking of—not in the royal household, I suppose?"

"No, no; in the Navy Office, where Mr. Pepys was good enough to tell me I should have to work for the money I received. I am a clerk,

mother, neither more nor less. I may be a little more than a city 'prentice lad, but I'm not sure even about that," added Launcelot, bitterly.

"But, my son, the king could never intend you to do any thing so menial, even for a time," said Mrs. Aylmer.

"It was the best Mr. Pepys could do for me, mother; and when I thought of you here I felt compelled to accept it."

"But only this for a quarter's salary? Why, it is little more than your father paid for a chaplain to say grace at dinner."

"Launcelot groaned. Visions of Aylmer Court and his mother's rose garden had been in his mind all the way home, and it was very hard, very bitter to give them up, and sink into the insignificance of a subordinate working clerk in the Navy Office.

But in a minute or two he raised his head, and said: "Be patient, mother; I will avenge my father's wrongs, and win back Aylmer for you before I die."

"O, Launcelot, I never thought the king would have forgotten us like this!' sobbed the poor lady, fairly breaking down; and Audrey joined in the outburst, for she, too, was as disappointed as any body, for there was no hope

now of displaying herself in patches, and wearing the old family finery.

After a little while Mrs. Aylmer recovered somewhat from her emotion, and then Launcelot had to tell her that he must go to a tailor's and buy a cloth doublet suitable to his changed condition. He made light of this part of the trial for his mother's sake; and the next morning, when he put it on, he took care not to give them time to examine it, but, upon the plea of reaching the Navy Office in time to join Mr. Pepys before he started for Deptford, he left home very early.

CHAPTER VI.

WORK.

NEVER had a day passed more quickly or pleasantly to Launcelot than his first day as a clerk of the Navy Office. Mr. Pepys, who lived next door to Sir William Penn in Seething Lane, had spent the previous evening with his neighbor, discussing the question of his son's removal from Oxford to Cambridge; for young William had greatly angered his father by espousing the cause of the Quakers in Oxford, and some months previously he had consulted Mr. Pepys about this, asking him to recommend a college and a tutor in Cambridge away from Quaker influence, which was the worst disgrace that could befall a young man anywhere, and meant nothing less than ruin to the son of the comptroller of the navy.

After talking of young William, Launcelot's name was mentioned, and Mr. Pepys related what had taken place at the office that day, bespeaking for his new clerk the kindly consideration of Sir William, who would often be

brought into contact with him. They both agreed that it was noble and praiseworthy of the young man to resolve to work for his mother and sisters; and, though they were both of one mind in their determination to make the naval department as efficient as possible, and to do this every body in it must work, still they could both render this less irksome, and, by treating Launcelot with the courtesy due to a gentleman, take half the sting from it.

And this they had done. The bluff sailor, Sir William Penn, was by no means a polished courtier, and at first Launcelot shrunk from him and his hearty laugh and rather coarse jokes; but he soon perceived that he treated Mr. Pepys and the captains of the ships with just as much freedom, that it was his usual manner of treating friends and equals, and therefore he could not complain. Mr. Pepys, who was more used to polished society than his sailor friend, treated him with every courtesy and consideration, invited him to dine with them, when for the first time for many months Launcelot had a really good dinner; and when he gave him directions to examine certain things, and take down in his pocket-book various items of information connected with the business they had come upon, he did

it in such a manner that the most sensitive man could not have felt hurt, and the work thus done lent an added exhilaration to the day.

When he parted with Mr. Pepys, on Tower Hill, and turned to walk home through the city, he was as cheerful and buoyant as though he had just returned from a delightful holiday; but before he reached home these feelings began to change. The city apprentices sharpening their small wits at his expense, the elbowing and pushing of the people along the narrow roadway, the invitations to buy hot tripe and sheep's feet, all reminded him most painfully that he was only one of the common crowd now, and not a privileged individual of a superior class; and the bitter hatred, forgotten for a time, returned, like an evil bird, to brood in his heart. His mother's reception of him at home, too, was not likely to lessen this. The downfall of their long-cherished hopes was very bitter to poor Mrs. Aylmer, and the idea that her idolized son had to work for their daily bread had well-nigh broken her heart. All day she had pictured him as suffering the gibes and jeers of an ignorant set of men—Puritans, of course—who would delight in making a Royalist feel their power; and so,

as Launcelot entered the sitting-room, his mother threw herself into his arms, exclaiming, "O, my son, my son!" and then burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"What is it, mother? Audrey, what has happened?" asked Launcelot, as he seated his mother in a high-backed chair, and turned to look round at his sister.

But Audrey only shook her head and wiped her eyes. "I don't know," she said, after a minute's pause, "only every thing is so miserable."

"Is Bessie worse?" asked her brother.

"No, no; it isn't Bessie, but you, my son, I have been thinking of all day," said Mrs. Aylmer, trying to overcome her emotion.

"Then, mother, don't think about me again," said Launcelot, a little sharply. "I have had a very pleasant day with Mr. Pepys and Sir William Penn—quite a holiday, in fact;" and then he went on to narrate some of the incidents of his visit to Deptford and Greenwich, and their long walk to Woolwich, and how the captain of one of the ships had told them that Negroes turn white if they are drowned.

But to hear that Launcelot had spent a pleasant day, when acting as a working clerk, was altogether inconceivable to Mrs. Aylmer, and

she said, rather reproachfully: "I am surprised, Launcelot, that you should take any pleasure in such vulgar stories, and going over dirty ships. If you are obliged to accept this appointment for a time, I hope you will not soon forget that you are an Aylmer."

"Why should you be vexed, mother, because I find the work less irksome than I expected?" said Launcelot.

"Because I never thought a son of mine would sink to the level of such work," said Mrs. Aylmer, loftily.

Launcelot looked annoyed. "What can I do?" he said. "The king has offered me this, and I must take it or starve. Why should it be more degrading to work—"

"Yes; it is that—the work," interrupted Audrey; "why couldn't the king have given you an appointment where you could tell others what to do, or have clerks who knew how to do the work necessary to be done without being told?"

It was clear that Audrey had been enlarging upon this grievance to her mother all day, that the two had spent the time making themselves miserable over it, and Launcelot wondered whether they had made Bessie a sharer in

their dismal forebodings. Leaving his mother without any further discussion of the subject, he crossed the room and opened Bessie's door, very gently, for fear she should be asleep.

"Ah, I heard you," she said, meeting him with a pleasant smile; "and now I want you to tell me about every thing. Audrey has been very unhappy about you all day because you had to work, you know."

"And haven't you been unhappy, too?" asked her brother, as he took his accustomed seat on the edge of the bed.

"Well, no, I don't think so; for when you told me about it last night I thought it was just the work God wanted you to do—the very best, you know, that he could have given you—or else he would certainly have let us go home to Aylmer again."

"And we will go to Aylmer again, Bessie, never fear. This work will only be for a little while; but I must do my best at it while it lasts, and then, when I see the king and can clear up all this mystery, he will doubtless hear that I served him faithfully as a clerk in the Navy Office, and may give me something better, as well as restoring Aylmer Court to my mother."

"And is the work very hard?" asked Bessie, in an anxious tone.

"It has not been at all difficult or disagreeable to-day," said Launcelot. "I went with Sir William Penn and Mr. Pepys to Deptford, Greenwich, and Woolwich."

"O, how delightful! What a pity Audrey did not go with you to wash her face in May-dew at Deptford; it is the best cure for pimples on the face, and makes the complexion so clear! Did you think to wash your face, Launce?" asked Bessie, with a roguish smile.

"Not in May-dew," answered her brother, laughing; "the grass and hedges were all dry when I saw them;" and then he related once more the story of his day's adventures.

"O, Launce, it must be delightful to be a clerk—better than going to court, I should think!" exclaimed Bessie.

"Well, I almost thought the same once or twice to-day; for there is a pleasant feeling in the thought that what you are doing is really useful. Now I can think that the little things I looked into and noted down to-day will help to make our brave sailors more comfortable, and their lives more safe, which is certainly an improvement on daw-

dling the hours away, trying to say something witty, and being laughed at for your pains."

Bessie feebly clapped her hands at this speech. "O, Launce, it's just what I have been thinking," she exclaimed. "As I lay here to-day I tried to think of you doing something really useful for the navy. You know father used to say that England ought to have the finest navy in the world; and I felt proud to think you would do your best to build it up."

"Well, that's just Mr. Pepys aim, as he told me to-day; and, of course, as he said, his clerks must carry it out, if it is to be done. But, Bessie, he told me to-day of a man who has done more than any other—more than we can possibly do for England's navy. He gave up all the emoluments of his office as treasurer, which amounted to £30,000 a year, merely stipulating that £2,000 should be paid to his deputy. Sir William Penn knew him well, and I hardly know whether to be angry with him or the king's advisers, when I heard them talking about him to-day; for he has just been sentenced to be hung, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn."

"O, Launce, how dreadful! Was he a

Roundhead—a friend of Cromwell?" asked Bessie.

"He was a Roundhead; but he separated himself from Cromwell when he turned out the Parliament, for he called himself a Fifth Monarchy man, which, as far as I can understand, is the maddest of all the Roundhead plans, for these professed to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was coming to reign in this world, and govern its affairs, of course, by means of the saints—these self-same Roundheads."

Bessie opened her eyes very widely. "What was this man's name?" she said.

"I hardly like to tell you, dear; for we knew him once—at least father did—and his father and ours have often sat in counsel together; for old Sir Harry Vane was a great friend of our martyr king, and for his sake I should have thought they might have spared his son, young Sir Harry Vane."

"I have heard my father talk of the Vanes, I think. But can nothing be done for him, Launce? Surely he cannot be a bad man, or he would never have done what you say for the navy, giving up the wealth that most men crave?"

"He was a striking contrast to some of

those in power now, who, not content with their lawful fees, sell all the appointments possible to enrich themselves still more," said Launcelot, bitterly.

"What a pity this Sir Harry Vane was not a Royalist! He might have been at the navy now. But how is it he is to be hung? I thought the king had granted a general pardon to all who had been in rebellion, except those who had actually caused our martyr king to be beheaded? Is this Vane one of those dreadful regicides?"

"No; he had no hand in the murder of King Charles, and he has meddled very little in state affairs since his quarrel with Cromwell, but lived quietly with his family at Raby Castle, trusting for safety to the general amnesty proclaimed to all. But it seems that, although he and his friends never knew it, there was a secret exception made in his case, and soon after the king returned he was seized and taken to the Tower; but the king had to promise Parliament that his life should be spared."

"Then how say you he is to be hung at Tyburn?" interrupted Bessie, quickly.

"Because there was a riot of these same Fifth Monarchy men last January, and—"

"But if Sir Harry Vane was in prison, he could not have caused it?" put in Bessie.

"That's just Sir William Penn's argument," said Launcelot. "He hates Fifth Monarchy men, Quakers, and all sectaries; but he declares Sir Harry Vane is a right noble Englishman, in spite of his being a precisian, and it sets men's tongues wagging against the king. Sir William Penn says men are grumbling that the king all along intended the death of Vane, and, though restrained by Parliament for a time, has seized the first excuse he could to put him out of the way."

"But is it really so? Do you think it can be?" asked Bessie, who had been brought up to regard it almost a sin to think the king could do wrong.

"I don't know what to think," said her brother. "Sometimes I wish I did not think at all; I would not bate my loyalty to the king because some evil-disposed man has turned his heart from us, and yet— There, Bessie," he suddenly broke off, "we will not talk longer of things we cannot understand; I ought not to have told you about this Vane business. Now tell me how you are to-day—do you feel any better?"

"I don't feel any thing, Launce—that is so

strange; and I don't want to get up, or move my feet at all," said Bessie.

"We will have another chirurgeon to see you; perhaps this one does not understand your case."

"He understands just how I feel," said Bessie; "and he is so kind that I think we had better wait a little longer. But if I could be carried in and laid on the bench by the window in the next room, I should like that. It is dull here sometimes."

Her brother looked round the close little room, with its tiny window that barely admitted daylight. "I wonder we had not thought of that before," he said; "but, feeling sure you would not be here long, we forgot to make the best of things. I'll go and talk to mother about it now; I should think a bed might be made up on the bench in the window, and then you could see all the boats and barges on the river."

"And I could feel as though I was going to Deptford or Greenwich in them," laughed Bessie. "I am glad something is settled, and we need not wait any longer; are not you, Launce?"

"Settled? I don't know what you mean, Bessie," said her brother.

"Well, we sha'n't be waiting to go to Aylmer Court now; and so we can begin to make things comfortable here, and—and begin our search, you know, Launce. I understand more about it now, I think, than I did. The holy Light that old man talked about is the Spirit of God in man, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, if we will but clear away the rubbish and dirt of folly and sin, selfishness and worldliness, that buries and stifles the holy Light God has given us."

"Who has been talking to you about these things?" demanded her brother, sharply. "You're not going to die, Bessie?" he said, in an eager, alarmed whisper.

"O, no, I hope not; what makes you think I shall?" asked Bessie.

"Because—because—I don't like to hear you talk like this, Bessie. It makes me think—but there, tell me why you think about such things, dear. It was all very well for that old man in Flanders, he couldn't live long; and as for worldliness—well, the world had never done much for him, I should say. If you were old now—"

"What! keep God waiting until I am an old woman?" said Bessie, quickly.

Launcelot looked uncomfortable.

"You talk very strangely for a young girl. I do not understand what could have put such ideas into your head just now."

"Why, you know, we agreed that we would think about this as soon as we got to England; but I am afraid I should have forgotten all about it if it had not been for this accident in the church. Since then it has all come back to my mind, and talking with Mary has helped me to understand things better."

"Who is Mary?" demanded Launcelot, sharply. He felt angry that his sister had been disturbed, as he called it, but in reality it was because his conscience was whispering that Bessie was right, and he did not choose to listen to its voice.

"What makes you speak like that, Launce?" said Bessie, in a hurt tone. "Mary has brought me some more flowers to-day, and sat with me nearly an hour; and I thought you would be glad to know I had such a kind friend. Mother told you all about her when she came before."

"You mean this Puritan pastor's daughter, I suppose? I wonder mother suffers her to come here teaching you to be a Ranter, or a Quaker, or some other kind of sectary!" said Launcelot, still in the same cross tone.

Bessie could scarcely restrain her tears.

"Why are you so unkind about this?" she said. "I am sure Mary would teach me no harm; and as for being a Puritan, her father is one of the king's chaplains, I believe, as well as Mr. Baxter, so that you may be sure she is not a Quaker."

"It don't matter much what she calls herself; she has set you fretting over what no young girl troubles her head about, and I don't like it. There, don't cry, Bessie; we wont quarrel over it. I will go and talk to mother about moving you to the other room, before I go out to-morrow."

Mrs. Aylmer was quite willing that they should move Bessie every day to the larger room, when the doctor gave them permission; but he had left such strict injunctions that she should be kept quite still, that until he gave them leave to move her, she thought it would be dangerous to attempt it. Of course, she knew nothing of what the doctor had told Launcelot of the hopelessness of Bessie's case, and he did not feel equal to the task of telling her to-night; so Bessie was easily persuaded to wait until the doctor's next visit, that his opinion might be asked upon the matter.

CHAPTER VII.

MARY'S HOME.

THE slant rays of the setting sun came through the diamond-paned lattice of a pleasant sitting-room—pleasant in spite of its stiff high-backed chairs, the polished oak floor, and the russet tints of the arras on the walls; for this general somberness was lighted up by the wide bay-window, the floor of which was raised a step above the other portion of the room; and in this embrasure there was a lady's work-table, while about the room were disposed several bunches of flowers in quaint vases—not rare or costly flowers by any means, but such as could be bought in the London herb market for a penny a bunch. Had they been more costly, Mary Maitland could not have decked her "fair summer parlor," as she called this room; for every penny had to be counted in this household, or they could not have helped their poorer neighbors as they did. Launcelot Aylmer would have called the curate's income a mere pittance, for

it was little more than what he was to receive at the Navy Office; but Herbert Maitland was content, and more than content, with it, for he craved no luxury beyond that of being able to help the poor of his flock, and by dint of careful management he was able to do this; and there was not a happier family in London than the Maitlands, despite the small economies they were obliged to practice.

But this evening Mr. Maitland sat, resting after his day's toil, with an unwonted look of anxiety on his usually placid face. His black silk skull-cap was pushed awry, and, as Mary came in with some needle-work in her hand, a deep sigh from her father at once attracted her notice.

"What is the trouble, my father?" she asked, laying aside her work, and kneeling at her father's feet. She leaned her head against his shoulder, and passed her fingers caressingly over the delicate white hands that rested on his knees—a mixture of the dutiful reverence of the daughter and loving solicitude of the mother in her attitude.

"What is it, my father?" she repeated.

"My child, the times are out of joint, and I am growing old," said the minister.

"Nay, nay; you are tired, and the quartan

ague hath not quite left you. I will go and prepare a lamb's-wool posset for your supper;" and Mary rose instantly from her knees and went to the kitchen, despite her father's protestations that he needed no lamb's-wool to-night. In a short time she returned with a small bowl of steaming spiced ale, with a crab-apple floating at the top—the lamb's-wool posset—and some toasted bread, which she insisted her father should take, while she showed him how cleverly she had contrived to cut out a pair of hose for one of the boys from the remains of a green baize table-cover. These little domestic contrivances never failed to give her father pleasure in the usual way; but to-day he only glanced at her handiwork and said, with a sigh:

"You are like your mother, Mary; but now I must tell you about this business concerning Sir Harry Vane."

"His life is to be spared, is it not, father? You always said it would be, you know."

"I spoke witlessly. Men hoped great things from King Charles, hoping he had learned wisdom from adversity; but I fear me his race never learn and never forget."

"But about Sir Harry Vane—surely such a cruel sentence will not be carried out?" said

Mary. "When Mr. Baxter was here yesterday, he said, although he could not hold with Sir Harry in his religious fantasies, he was one of the noblest Englishmen who had ever served the state, and it would be a blot on the king's reign if his sentence was executed."

"Well, well, there has been some modification granted as to the manner of his death; but that is the utmost grace that the king will grant. He is to be beheaded on Tower Hill, as becomes his degree, instead of being hung at Tyburn like the meanest criminal," said Mr. Maitland, sadly. He had always sympathized with Vane in his aspirations after religious liberty, which had sometimes brought upon him the censure of his brethren, whose creed was elastic enough to allow every one to think as they did; but beyond this point it was heresy, and Quakers and Vaneists were heretics whom they must needs *drive* back to the fold since they would not follow at the call of the appointed shepherds. Let us be just to these Puritan persecutors, who for the last few years had been beating, imprisoning, and transporting Quakers by hundreds. They believed they were doing God service, and it was "strange work" to them—a pain and bitterness that wrung their souls even while they did

it; but, with their stern creed, they would have thought themselves weak and unworthy of their position as ministers of the truth, had they listened to the voice of pity, either in themselves or others, and shrunk from inflicting pain which might prove efficacious in saving the souls of their victims from the pains of hell hereafter.

Persecution had not gone to this length with Mr. Maitland. It was rather like what we call drawing-room persecution that he had to endure from his brethren, but it was none the less hard to bear sometimes. He was not exactly a heretic, for he had never fully identified himself with the Vaneists; but he was labeled "unsound," and his brethren gave him the cold shoulder, and he was kept in the background as much as possible. Every body conceded that he was a good and useful man —very useful as a hard-worked curate in this poor parish; but his talents might prove dangerous if they were recognized and allowed free scope; and so, for his own sake, it was tacitly agreed that no Church preferment should come his way.

Mr. Maitland had been content to labor with this slight recognition of his worth; but now that he had been trying to arouse his

brethren to make some protest against the legalized murder of Sir Harry Vane, he felt hurt, almost outraged, at the scant civility with which his proposals had been received. It seemed to him that they more than half acquiesced in the unjust sentence because of Sir Harry's liberal views; and he had been betrayed into speaking words that he now feared would prove but too true, and his own share in the misfortune would be heavy indeed.

After talking about Sir Harry Vane for some little time, Mr. Maitland picked up the green baize stocking Mary was making, and said: "It is well you learned thriftiness of your mother, Mary, for we have need to practice it now."

Mary glanced at her father as he said this. "There is some other trouble, then, besides this of Sir Harry Vane?" she said, quickly.

"Have you not heard, Mary, of this new Act of Uniformity that is to be enforced on all ministers?" asked her father.

Mary nodded. She had heard all about it; but knowing, too, that her father was not in all points at one with his fellow-ministers, she had half hoped that he would conform to the requirements of the Act. If he did not, she scarcely knew what the penalties might be, and she said so.

"Then, my dear, I must tell you, that you may prepare, as far as in you lies, and suffer no waste in the household. Many hope that this Act will not be so rigidly enforced as is threatened; but, as I said to one and another to-day, How can we pray for liberty of conscience for ourselves—the right to serve God after our own heart's desire—if we grant not the same liberty to others who differ from us? And I fear me the king will enforce it, and we shall be forced to leave this fair summer parlor and our goodly heritage here."

"But where shall we go?" asked Mary, in a tone of dismay. She had never glanced at this aspect of the question. It would be pain and grief enough to her father to have to give up ministering to his flock, and the thought of this had occupied Mary's mind, to the total exclusion of the more material part of the question as it affected herself and the children.

"Where shall we go? what shall we do, my father?" she asked again.

"Have you no other Father than me, my Mary?" said the minister, solemnly but tenderly, stroking the soft chestnut hair.

Mary colored and looked down. "But the children, father?" she said, in a whisper.

"He is their Father, too, and will provide

for them as well as the young ravens. Cannot you trust your little sorrows to Almighty care?" he whispered.

Mary's tears were falling freely now. "O! father, forgive me; I will try to bear it and help you; but just at first—" and then choking sobs stopped her further utterance.

"I know, I know, my Mary; and, better still, Jesus knows your troubles, too, for he was in like case, and knew not where to lay his head; so we may safely take our troubles to him."

"And—and when shall we have to leave this house, my father?" asked Mary, falteringly. It was the only home she remembered—dear to her as the memory of the mother which hallowed it to all of them—and the thought of leaving it made her heart faint with dismay at first.

"My Mary, you must be braver than this," whispered her father, while he tried to soothe her grief,

"But—but is there no escape, my father? Is it quite impossible that we can stay here?" asked Mary.

Her father put her from him for a moment, and covered his face with his hands. Presently he looked at her again, and a spasm of

pain crossed his face. "I never thought there could be any question as to what was my duty in this matter," he said; "but I see now I am trespassing upon your right, even in this, my Mary; for you must bear the penalty of my action, and why should you not have some choice in the matter? You are not a child now, although you are my daughter, and, therefore, you have the right to that liberty of judgment Sir Harry Vane and I have always contended for."

"Nay, nay, my father; you must choose for me in this matter. I am but a witless, fractious maiden," said Mary, quickly.

"My Mary, you are a woman of judgment in most things, and for me to take this in hand without regard to your thoughts upon the matter will be to break the law I would fain uphold—the right of liberty of conscience for all. As you know, many of my flock still prefer the old way of worship, with the help of a prayer book; and to them I have said, 'Use the book an it help you to lift your heart to God. Why should a man lie still on the ground when there are crutches to help him to walk?' and I have ministered to these from the prayer book. But when 'tis said to me, 'You must always walk with these same

crutches,' I say, 'Nay, nay; these are no helps, but hinderances to me in my walk with God, and I will none of them;' and even were I free to impose them upon myself, there are those in my flock to whom they would be chains and fetters. I would you should consider this, my Mary. Understand, I say not aught in despite of the prayer book, save that it should not be imposed upon all; but I had no thought of subscribing this Act of Uniformity, because it seeks to bring men's souls into bondage. But—but—I'll say no more, my Mary; think over what I have said, and—"

"My father, I will do as you wish," said Mary, quickly.

"But that is not what I wish," said her father. "I would that you should think over what I have said, and weigh the cost of the thing we contend for. Men have struggled and died before now for religious freedom, and we had fain hoped the fight was well-nigh over. But Puritan and Papist alike have to be taught by God's sore judgments; for once they either get the upper hand, they deny to their brethren that liberty to serve God according to their own conscience they claim for themselves. I much doubt whether this persecution of the people called Quakers is as

pleasing to God as we have supposed ; and if we, too, are made to taste the bitter-sweet of persecution, we can but lay our mouth in the dust and say, 'Lord, thou art just.'"

"But, my father, you have never persecuted the Vaneists or Quakers," said Mary, "but often spoken a word on their behalf; wherefore, then, should you suffer this persecution?"

"Am I not of those who have often taken part in the persecution of these defenseless people?" said Mr. Maitland.

"Doth God only deal with men in crowds, then?" asked the girl, somewhat bitterly.

"Mary, Mary! you will make this trial bitter indeed, an you take it in this spirit," said her father. "God dealeth with nations and communities as such, chastising the sin that is national and general; but this hinders not his giving to each individual the help he needs. The bitter-sweet of persecution may be given to many; but he can teach each soul what to extract from it for its due nourishment—the bitter or the sweet; for man doth not live by bread alone, but by the invisible word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Mary could not reply, but sat silently weeping for a minute or two, and then went out of

the room, for she did not want to distress her father by her own faithless forebodings. How could she help being anxious and troubled when she thought of the children? And now her father had made her duty harder still by putting the choice in some sort into her own hands; for she knew that the question of submitting to this Act of Uniformity would not be decided without reference to her. As she laid aside the baize stocking she was making, she wondered what she could do to help to support the family; for, expelled from house and home, as she feared they would be, something must be done to provide for their every-day wants; for she remembered another lesson she had also learned from her father, that God works by means; and to sit down helpless and expect that God would rain manna here in London, where there is work to be done and bread won by work, is as faithless as to forget God entirely.

Now the question was, What work could Mary do? and she sat, troubled and anxious, thinking over this, and calling herself many hard names because she could not lay aside the care that oppressed her, forgetting that this practical, energetic mind of hers was a gift from God, and the fitting complement and

balance of her father's calm, restful trust and brave determination to dare all in the cause of religious liberty, in spite of consequences. It was natural, perhaps, that these more ordinary gifts should be overlooked by both father and daughter—that they should fail to see that this, too, was of God, and, failing to recognize it, should grieve over it. At all events, it was a source of pain to both to-night; and, to escape from these troubled thoughts, Mary at length went down to the children's room, where their merry chatter would be sure to dispel all gloomy thoughts.

She likewise had another object in doing this, for, in view of what was likely to happen, it was clearly her duty to lessen the household expenditure at once; and some months previously they had taken a young lady into the house, to teach the children and be a companion to herself. It is true the salary paid her was but small, for she had been glad to come for the sake of a comfortable home; but even this would soon be beyond their means, and she must tell Mistress Stanley at once of what was likely to take place, that she might inquire for another situation. But, to her surprise, the girl only shook her head when she told her she must leave them shortly. "No, no,"

she said; "I was an orphan and friendless when your father brought me home and treated me as a daughter, and now that I may be able to help you I will not go away."

"But, my dear Rosalind, you do not understand you have helped—you do help me, and I shall miss you sorely, but—but—"

"And I can help you more," interrupted the young governess. "Pardon the question, Mary, but what are you going to do when your father has to give up this pleasant parsonage?"

Mary shook her head. "I have been trying to think of something," she said, sadly.

"Couldn't you learn to make lace? I could teach you," said Rosalind, a little timidly.

"Lace!" uttered Mary, in surprise, and with a touch of scorn in her tone. As a Puritan she had been brought up to look upon this handicraft as savoring too much of the pomps and vanities of the world to be other than an invention of Satan; and, knowing this, Rosalind had carefully concealed her lace-making, which, nevertheless, she had carried on in the privacy of her own chamber; for the fine intricate work was a delight to her rather than a toil.

"I know you never wear lace," said Rosa-

lind; "but many of our citizens and their wives do, now it is so fashionable; and I have been making some lately, thinking I might be glad of the money some day, and—and I thought we might both make it, and earn some money when we have to go away from here," added Rosalind, timidly.

Mary had not spoken a word since her scornful exclamation, but she was deeply touched by this proof of Rosalind's devotion, and, kissing her, she said, "You shall show me this lace, dear, and we will see what can be done with it; but she had no intention of learning lace-making herself. It was a great concession even to discuss such a matter otherwise than to denounce it; and Mary was in some doubt whether she was right in yielding so far even as this.

CHAPTER VIII.

BURSTING THE FETTERS.

"NOW, Mary, don't you think you could learn to do it?" and Rosalind looked up from her lace pillow; but her fingers were still busy with the bobbins.

The girls were by themselves in Rosalind's own room now, for she had never veutured to bring her lace pillow out, for the children or even Mary to see her at work, until now; but in the early spring mornings she had been up at daylight, that she might have a little time to give to her beloved work—working for the delight of doing so, more than any thing else. Mary looked down at the flying fingers with a sort of fascination, as she said, slowly, "I wonder whether I ought to try and learn?"

"O, I wish you would!" said Rosalind. "If you would learn to do the web on the pillow, I could work the pattern with my needle. I learned in Flanders, you know, where all the best lace is made, and I have some very good patterns. This lace is worth

five crowns a yard when it is finished," added the girl.

"Five crowns!" repeated Mary; "and do you think we could sell it?"

"O yes. Don't you see, our citizens have taken to wear lace lately." She would not say a word about the king and court, who had made it fashionable again, for fear of rousing Mary's antagonism to the plan.

Mary stood over the governess, watching her busy fingers as they plied the bobbins and shifted the pins, but it was scarcely with a view of learning the delicate art herself. A far more difficult point had to be settled first, and before she could touch a bobbin a battle must be fought and won. Many such battles had her father fought, but to Mary the warfare was new. She had been carefully brought up Sheltered from the evil of the world, she had been taught that the pomps and shows of fine dress were part of this evil; but she had not failed to notice, as Rosalind had reminded her, that many a good citizen, both men and women, had begun to wear lace lately; and one good woman whom she knew had said to her, only the week before, she was glad lace was coming into fashion again—she had never left off wearing it herself—because it enabled

her to help one or two poor women who were lace-makers.

Mary had asked why she could not give them the money without having the lace, at which the lady had shaken her head, saying: "My dear, it would hurt them to do that; but it hurts nobody to wear a little lace, unless they are full of foolish vanity, and then they would be the same without the lace."

"But is not lace one of the pomps of the world?" said Mary, a little puzzled.

"If we make it so, it is," replied her friend. "But your pretty, neat hood might be the same, if you indulge the pride and vanity of your heart in thinking about its neatness. If the pride and vanity are there, they had better show themselves in the outward man, that they may be checked and overcome. But if they be not there, the wearing of lace will not put them there; so make your mind easy, Mary, about me and my bit of lace," said her old friend, laughing.

Thinking over this again to-night made Mary any thing but easy. But for this incident, she might have put away the idea of lace-making as a temptation of Satan to draw her into the meshes of the world and its vanities, which she was bound to renounce; but she loved

and venerated her old friend, and she had spoken some warm words in defense of lace-making, saying, God had given women quick, handy fingers to help him in his work in beautifying the world, instead of strong arms of men, which were needful for its rougher tasks.

Mary had felt inclined to look upon this as another of her friend's heresies, in spite of her reverence, for she had heard her spoken of as a Vaneist; but now, as she stood watching Rosalind's flying fingers, the question came to her, If God had given these fingers their deftness and skill, surely he had intended that they should be used? Her father was so frequently saying that every gift of God should be used, and was given for use; only, was the making of lace the right use, the use God would have them put to?

It is a pain to burst the bonds of any narrow creed, and though to us it may seem a light and trivial thing, this question of lace-making, to Mary Maitland, reared in all the stiffness and unbending formality of Puritanism, it was a question of much anxious thought and prayer. She could not take her perplexity to her father, either; for as the days went on, and all his efforts to rouse his

friends to make another effort on behalf of Sir Harry Vane proved unavailing, he became more grieved and anxious, and Mary would not add to his trouble by laying her burden upon him.

But during this time it became increasingly probable that they would have to leave their home and living in August, and that her father would not be allowed to undertake any thing, even a lectureship, if it were offered him, unless he conformed to the use of the prayer book; and if she could only reconcile her mind to learn this lace-making, she would cheerfully urge him to do what he could on behalf of religious liberty.

She little thought that a similar struggle must be fought out in herself first—ah! and the victory gained, too—before she could lend the help that was needful for her father to join the noble band of non-conforming ministers who would protest in the name of religious liberty. At length she paid a visit to her old friend, to talk the matter over; for although Mary did not profess to have made up her mind, she had so far broken through the narrow prejudice of her education as to be anxious to discuss it as a possibility, should nothing else offer, by which she might earn something for their daily bread by and by.

"O, my dear, my dear, I am glad!" said gentle Mrs. Hawkins, warmly, when Mary told her about the lace-making project. "If this dreadful Act of Uniformity does such good work as this, I shall be able to thank God for it ungrudgingly. Of course I ought to do so, I know; but I am a poor timid woman. And so many ministers like your father, Mary, have large families, but small means, that it has seemed it could only bring distress and woe; but if it makes others like you burst through the grave-clothes of a narrow creed, and walk abroad in God's beautiful world, I shall thank him for what looks so cruel now."

"Grave-clothes!" repeated Mary, in some astonishment.

"My dear, it was little better. Doubtless it was done at first as a protest against levity and wanton attire; but it came to be a narrowing, cramping, stifling creed at last, that would fain have made the grass gray and the sky drab, instead of green and blue, and looked upon the very flowers with suspicion, because God, who delights in beauty, has made them beautiful."

"O, I always loved flowers, and so does my father," said Mary, quickly.

"Your father is brave enough even to love our noble Sir Harry Vane," said the old lady, with a tremble in her voice; "but you were afraid of a bit of lace a little while ago—looking upon it as a device of Satan, I verily believe?"

"Yes, I did," confesssed Mary; "but what you said about it, and what my father has said about using every gift of God, has—"

"Has made you alter your opinion about it. And now you think you could make it, and sell it to vain old ladies like me, who always like the touch of soft fine lace, if it will help to lift the burden from your father's shoulders. You are a brave girl, Mary. Not for making the lace—any deft fingers could do that, I fancy—but for conquering yourself, bursting the bondage of narrow forms and customs, and daring to think for yourself and do right, though all the world should be against you."

Mary sighed. "I don't know what my father will say to the plan," she said.

"His first question will be, 'Mary, have you thought about this thing?—do you think it right to make this fine lace?' and if you can say truly, 'My father, I think God has shown us, by the way that he covers every rough

and unseemly ruin with a beautiful drapery of leaves and flowers, that he would have our bodies covered with garments that are graceful and pleasing to the eye, as well as useful,' he will not say nay to your plan. I say not aught about your desire to help your father to brave the world, and be true to himself and the noble truths he has always taught; because the first thing for you is to be fully persuaded in your own mind that the means by which you try to accomplish this is right in itself. You must win freedom for your own soul first, Mary; for it would be a bitter bondage, and a cruel mockery, to undertake this in the name of religious liberty, not feeling that you were at liberty to do it, or with a half suspicion that you were helping Satan to weave fetters for the world. Therefore, my dear, consider what I have said, but do not try to feel that you are bound to believe as I do. Let God's own Spirit teach you; and if liberty of soul is good for you, he will lead you into it. Some souls are feeble and maimed, and can only go limping in bandages and swaddling-clothes or grave-clothes—I scarcely know what to call them—only your father's child should scarcely be one of those feeble folk. Mind, Mary, my ove, these are not to be despised; and we must

be careful how we use our God-given liberty, lest they should be offended; for these are the 'little ones' of the flock, who must be borne with tenderly and patiently; only we must not bind ourselves with the bonds that may be helpful to them, but will be fetters and hinderances to us."

"That is just what my father said about using the prayer book—it might be helpful and useful to some, but not to all."

"Yes; and the same thing applies to all man-made ordinances; for if you will look closely, they are all the inventions of men—prickly hedges built up round the fold—very useful when men have not learned that Christ is the door, but cramping and binding God's beautiful world, when through that door we can go in and out, and find pasture and liberty for our souls. Now, my dear, I am not going to let you go back to the parsonage to-day. I am going to see my old friends, the Evelyns, at Saye Court, and you shall go with me by barge to Deptford; and the sight of the hedge-rows and meadows will help you a bit in the struggle; for you are having a hard time of it, my dear, I can see."

Mary's eyes had filled with tears at the words of sympathy spoken by her old friend.

"You seem to understand exactly how I feel about this," she said.

"My dear, I have fought the fight, and so I know what the pain is. Mine is not over the making or wearing a bit of lace, but it came to the same thing—a man-made ordinance that I mistook for a command of God. Now, my dear, the maid shall go and tell your father you are spending the day with me, and we will put on our hoods and walk to Paul's Wharf at once. All London is taking holiday, to show their joy at the landing of the new queen."

"Her coming will bring the Catholics into favor, my father fears," said Mary, as she tied on her prim camlet hood that shaded but could not entirely hide the sweet, gracious face beneath.

'May be it will, and may be it wont," said little Mrs. Hawkins, in her soft, unruffled voice. "We take a deal of trouble in borrowing God's care to lay upon our own shoulders, as though he had asked us to bear the care of the world, instead of inviting us to cast our care upon him. Look, my dear, these are some of the Portugal ladies, I expect, come over with the new queen—look, look, in that barge over there!—why, they are trying to make the farthingale fashionable again!"

"Did you ever wear a farthingale?" asked Mary, curiously.

"No, no, my dear; nothing could ever make such a monstrous fashion as that beautiful. Now, don't think, because I spoke about wearing lace as I did, that women should follow every whimsy of fashion; for then our Puritan protest would all be in vain. No, my dear; dress neatly and becomingly, with a bit of lace or a bit of ribbon an it pleases you, but nothing to excess—nothing to call notice to you either for primness or fantastic finery. Now, my man," she said, turning to one of the loungers, "you may call a boat for us to go to Deptford."

As the boat they were in shot out from the shore Mary looked up at one of the overhanging windows close by, and saw a face that she recognized.

"There is Mistress Aylmer, the girl who was hurt at Saint Dunstan's when Mr. Baxter was preaching there," said Mary, quickly. "I am so glad they have brought her out of that dull little room to sit at the window. What is she doing, I wonder? I can see her fingers moving. I do believe she is making lace, too!" exclaimed Mary. "Why, every body is making it!"

"It is becoming so fashionable that we shall certainly need more lace-makers," remarked Mrs. Hawkins; "for I heard the other day that some of the court ladies wore it round the bottom of their petticoats."

"O! what shameful extravagance!" said Mary. "But see how beautiful the fields look!" she exclaimed, for they were near the middle of the stream now, and the passing clouds were making moving pictures in the sunlight, across the soft green of the meadows that lined the opposite shore.

It was not often that Mary had such a holiday as this, and the old lady took care that she should enjoy it. All along the route there was something fresh to be seen, either in the gayly-decked boats and barges, or the hedge-rows and meadows along the banks; for this waterway was the most convenient mode of reaching the fashionable country-houses at Deptford or Greenwich, and so there was plenty of company going down with the tide this sweet May morning.

"It will be too late to wash your face with May-dew, which is the best cure for pale and sickly cheeks; but one thing is certain, you will be able to take home a goodly posy to deck your summer parlor, for the fields and

gardens around Saye Court are not such as can be seen every day," said Mrs. Hawkins, as they drew near the end of their journey. "My friend, Sir John Evelyn, takes great pride in his garden, and truly it is something to be proud of."

And Mary found that her friend's account of the gardens was not exaggerated. Over a hundred acres were laid out in groves, walks, miniature inclosures, and wide, smooth lawns of carefully-clipped grass. There was an apiary, too, with glass hives, so that she could stand and watch the bees at work in the hive.

"O, how beautiful every thing is!" she said, as she gazed at the busy insects at their toil.

"The bees are not afraid of making their work beautiful as well as useful," said the old lady, with a smile.

The rooms of the grand old manor-house were scarcely less wonderful to Mary than the gardens, for here were pictures of every description, and a wonderful laboratory, where Sir John Evelyn practiced chemistry; and on every hand were tokens of the piety as well as wealth and learning of these kind friends; for they were most kind to Mary, and welcomed

her almost as warmly as they did Mrs Hawkins herself.

It was a red-letter day in Mary's life—a day of refreshment to body and soul; and when she went back in the evening she felt stronger and better for this peep at God's beautiful handiwork.

CHAPTER IX.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"MARY, I must go; the sight of a few friendly faces in the crowd may help the poor gentleman, and our good friend, Mrs. Hawkins, would like to know how he bears himself, and how he is treated at the last. Not that we fear for him; such a brave and Christian gentleman as Sir Harry Vane cannot do other than make a good end."

"But, my father, there will be a crowd of the rough, rude men on Tower Hill," said Mary, "and many may call you a Vaneist if—"

"There, there; we will say no more about that," interrupted Mr. Maitland, who felt more than a little grieved that Mary had not spoken to him since about what she knew lay so near his heart—the protest that so many felt compelled to make just now, although it would cost them the giving up of all that life held dear.

He had expected that Mary would come the next day, and say she was prepared to

bear her share of the burden; but here was the 14th of June, and not a word had been said since the talk they had had in May, and Mr. Maitland was sorely grieved at it. He looked upon it as a grievous want of faith in his daughter. True, the living had never enabled him to lay aside a penny for such a contingency as this, but Mary had no right to allow such considerations to weigh with her. She ought to trust God implicitly, and believe that he would provide for them though all earthly help and means failed.

He little knew what a struggle had been going on in the girl's own heart all this time —that liberty had to be won for herself before she could protest for it on behalf of others; and so her very natural fears for her father's safety, when he proposed mingling with the rough crowd who would be sure to gather round the scaffold to witness the execution of Sir Harry Vane, was misunderstood, and taken as arising from her fears lest he should become identified with an unpopular cause.

The thought that his Mary could not, or would not, identify herself with him in what he and so many of his fellow-ministers had decided they could not, in loyalty to their own conscience, conform to, troubled him sorely

He could not decide how far he was right in bringing such trouble upon her—as it inevitably must fall as heavily upon her as himself, if she could not join with him heart and soul in this protest against the Act of Uniformity; and so it was with a sad and troubled heart, on more accounts than one, that he went to witness this tragedy—the martyrdom of this bold champion of civil and religious liberty, Sir Harry Vane.

He could do little to help the brave nobleman, however; for the crowd on Tower Hill was so great that he could not get near enough to the scaffold to hear a word of the long speech he had written, and insisted upon reading, in spite of the sheriff's attempts to stop him; but the brave fearless manner could not be mistaken.

As Mr. Maitland turned sadly away he was overtaken by a friend who had managed to get close to the scaffold and hear the speech. "He told them first of his life, that he was born a gentleman; he had been, till he was seventeen, a good fellow, but then it pleased God to lay a foundation of grace in his heart, by which he was persuaded, against his worldly interest, to leave all preferment and go abroad, where he might serve God with more freedom.

Then he was called home, and made a member of the Long Parliament, where he never did any thing against his conscience, but all for the glory of God. Here he would have given them an account of the proceedings of the Long Parliament, but they so often interrupted him that at last he was forced to give over; and so he fell into prayer for England in general, then for the churches in England, and then for the city of London, and so fitted himself for the block and received the blow. He changed not his color or speech to the last, but died justifying himself and the cause he had stood for, and spoke very confidently of being presently at the right hand of Christ."

This was the account of one who had but little sympathy for Sir Harry Vane's opinions; but even the crowd of rough fellows who had thronged Tower Hill spoke of his courage as something wonderful; and so with this for comfort the minister went to see Mrs. Hawkins.

Meanwhile Mary had prepared a surprise for her father upon his return home. In her own particular nook of the parlor, which was the raised embrasure of the window, where she could see to read or work long after every other part of the room was in shadow, stood Rosalind's lace pillow; and before it sat Mary,

twisting and twirling the bobbins, as deftly, if not as quickly, as Rosalind herself. It had not been so easy to learn this as Mary had imagined. It had been a trial of patience to her and Rosalind both; but perseverance had conquered at last, and now she had begun a piece of web with the fine Flemish flax thread of which the best lace was made, instead of the common cotton thread which she had used while learning the delicate art. Mary felt positively exultant over her success as she looked at the inch or two of web slowly growing under her fingers; but her father had heard nothing of this lace-making project, and when he came into the room and saw his Mary sitting before a lace pillow, twirling those abominable bobbins, he was filled with consternation.

"Mary, Mary, what are you doing?" he exclaimed, looking at her in horror.

"Making lace, father," said Mary, quietly; "did not Mrs. Hawkins tell you about it?" she asked.

"I believe she did say something about lace when I was leaving, but I paid little heed to her words, for I never thought a child of mine would want such vanities," said the minister, rather severely.

Mary laid aside the pillow, and stepped across the room to where her father was standing. "You are tired and sad, my father," she said; "we will not talk about the lace now. I will fetch you a horn of cider and a slice of cold beef."

"Not just yet, Mary; I am sad and sorrowful, but eating and drinking will not remedy that;" and as he spoke he cast his eyes toward the lace pillow again.

"You do not think I am making that lace for myself, do you, father?" asked Mary.

"My girl, it is sorrow enough that you are making it," said the minister, reproachfully.

Mary looked across at her pillow, and said, gently: "How can I make you understand it, I wonder? Father, it has been a great struggle; I have wept, and prayed, and thought many an hour before I would consent to learn that lace-making; but it was borne in upon me at last that I might learn—that I ought to learn it, and—"

"And deck yourself out in all the vain finery—"

"No, no, father, not for that," said Mary, quickly. She would not tell him now the main object she had in view when she first thought of this. "It is not for myself that I

am making it, Perhaps when I am as old as Mrs. Hawkins I may like a bit of soft lace, but not just now. But you have taught me, my father, that the skill of our fingers is God's gift to us, and when I went to Saye Court, about a month ago, I could not but marvel how beautiful God's works were."

"Yes, yes," interrupted the minister, rather impatiently; "God's works are beautiful, but that has nothing to do with us."

"But if God loves beautiful things, may not we love them also?"

"Certainly—the beautiful things God has made."

"But then why may we not use the skill of our fingers to make other things beautiful? Are things any better for being ugly?" asked Mary.

Her father evaded the question. "Lace is to deck this sinful body," he said; "and what right have we to try and make that beautiful!"

"Because God has done so. Our faces are pleasant to look at. He might have made us hideous instead, and, that being so, I cannot think that it can be displeasing to him if we try to make ourselves look pleasing to each other."

The minister sat down in his own high-backed arm-chair, and looked steadfastly at his daughter, "My dear, if, as you say, you have prayed earnestly over this matter, and this is your heartfelt belief, I have nought to say against it. Should you choose to become a Quaker or a Vaneist, I should be compelled to respect your belief, much as it might grieve me, Mary; and it must be the same with this."

"O, father, cannot you see that if God makes things so beautiful, we may surely use our hands to do the same?" exclaimed Mary, in a grieved tone. She had thought it would be so easy to persuade her father into sympathizing with her in this view of the matter, that the mere tolerance he was prepared to give—comparing it even with Quakerism—was bitterly disappointing to her. It did not shake her opinion, however. She had fought her fight, and won the victory, and was prepared for opposition and shocked surprise from friends; and although she had hoped for more than tolerance from her father, she was enabled to bear even this, in the hope of being able to help him in his noble struggle by and by. She would not return to her lace-making now, and resolved to take her pillow

out of the parlor, and keep it out of his sight as much as possible in future.

She went now and fetched the horn of cider she had recommended, and brought with it a slice of the pasty left from dinner; and while her father was eating his supper she asked about what had happened on Tower Hill, and what the people thought of the matter.

"They like it not, as I gather, and there are loud complaints against the Act of Uniformity, which will drive all the Presbyterian ministers from London; but it will end in these complainings — nothing more will be done."

As Mr. Maitland said this he looked keenly at Mary, and a little color rose to her cheek as she said:

"My father, you will not comply with this Act?"

"What—what do you mean, Mary?" asked the minister, eagerly, with more animation in his face than she had seen for a long time.

"I have thought about it, father, and we cannot do this even to stay here," said Mary.

"God bless you, my Mary!" said her father, earnestly, his face radiant with joy. "It has been a sore grief to me of late that you

could not come to me and say we will protest together and bear the trouble together; for what right had I to protest alone, while the trouble must be shared? Do not fear, my Mary; the Lord who provides for the witless little birds will provide for his servants who trust in him."

He had quite forgotten the lace-making and every other unpleasant subject in the joy of feeling that, whatever he might be called upon to do in the name of right and truth, Mary would sympathize with him, and cheerfully share the sacrifice involved, whatever it might be.

"When shall we have to go away from here?" asked Mary, with a little paling of the cheek as she spoke, for she knew it would be a bitter pain to her to leave her home—the only home she had ever known.

"The last time I shall preach in the church will be the 17th of August—about two months hence," said her father, trying to subdue the quaver in his voice. "For what right have I to grieve, since Mary has given me such joy?" he whispered to himself.

"Then we have two months to make our arrangements. I should like to live near here, if we can," said Mary, thinking of her lace, and

how difficult it might be to dispose of it if they went away from London.

"We can only take a small house—much smaller than this," said Mr. Maitland, as he looked round the pleasant old room and thought that they would have to do without a parlor soon. It was in continuation of this thought that he said: "I must find a customer for some of this furniture before we move."

"Must we sell it?" gasped Mary, the tables and chairs suddenly becoming very precious to her.

"What can we do with it?" asked her father. I shall, doubtless, find some employment; but I know not what it will be, for so many will be in like evil case that some will have to wait awhile. I could do good scrivener's work with my pen, but other craft have I none wherewith to earn my bread. But this savors of unbelief," he suddenly added, correcting himself. "Let us not talk of this, except as we must prepare for our removal."

"It is best to talk of it, I think," said Mary. "We must think of what is best to be done."

She longed to tell her father that she and Rosalind could earn money by lace-making; but she was afraid to mention it for fear he

should peremptorily forbid her doing it for such a purpose.

"To be sure, my dear; and although the Lord promises to provide bread and water for his servants, he says nought about giving them summer parlors or pasties, and so in future we will do without pasties; and, though we may keep the parlor a little longer, we must be content by and by to sit in the keeping-room or kitchen. You will tell Deb to make no more pasties, Mary," he added.

"I always make them myself, father. I made this for the children, but—"

"What shall we do about telling the children?" asked Mr. Maitland, who was eager to consult Mary about every thing now.

"Not yet, father," said Mary. "I have told Rosalind, and—and—"

Mary stammered and colored, for she hardly knew how to tell her father of the bargain she and Rosalind had made with each other. But he was too eager to notice her hesitation.

"My dear, Rosalind is an orphan, and our home is hers as long as she wishes to stay with us," he said, quickly.

"And—and she wishes to stay," said Mary.

"Then, my dear, the Lord will provide for her as well as us," said Mr. Maitland.

Mary mentally called herself some hard names as she thought of the lace-making, and wished she could "rest in the Lord" as her father did.

"Now, my dear, about Deb," said the minister. "Have you thought about her?"

Mary nodded.

"Rosalind and I can do the work if we go into a smaller house, and I must teach Annie to help us," said Mary.

"Then will you speak to Deb, and tell her to inquire for a good place among the citizens? But if she be not suited, she must go hence with us until the Lord open the way for her."

"I should like to go and talk to Mrs. Hawkins about it to-morrow," said Mary, thinking that her old friend's strong common-sense and long experience would be of great service to her in the re-adjustment of their affairs.

"My dear, I promised you should go, but had almost forgotten it. Our old friend wishes to see you. I am not sure she told me what it was about. I find it hard to remember every thing, and I have seen and heard so much to-day."

"You are quite worn out, I can see, father," said Mary, tenderly. "Let me bring you the Bible, and call Deb and the children at once;"

and, as she spoke, Mary brought the big Bible, and placed it open before her father, and then summoned the rest of the family for the usual evening worship.

The next morning, soon after breakfast, Mary walked to Mrs. Hawkins's, and, as usual, found the old lady busy in her kitchen, although she kept two maids and a serving-man to attend her.

"There is nothing like looking into affairs yourself, Mary," said the old lady, as she finished the venison pasty she had been making, and turned to greet Mary. "Come with me now to the parlor, and tell me what you think of my plan. Your father told you all about it?"

Mary colored, but was obliged to confess that her father must have forgotten all about it.

"Dear, dear, the poor man's head is almost turned with one tronble and another. Well, well, all the more reason that somebody should think for him. Now, my dear, you know you will have to move in August, when your father gives up or is turned out of the living, whichever you are pleased to call it; and one of my houses near the river has just become vacant, and I think you had better come and live in it."

"O, thank you, Mrs. Hawkins!" said Mary. "I shall be glad if I shall be able to pay the rent."

"I'll take it in lace," said Mrs. Hawkins, quickly. "Mind, it is not so large as yours."

"Then father did remember something about it, for he said we must sell some of the furniture."

"No, no, Mary; you and I must prevent that. We must make the new home as much like the old one as we can;" and then they entered into a detailed discussion of the whole plan; and Mary spent a pleasant day with her friend, and went home much more refreshed and strengthened for her arduous work.

CHAPTER X.

BLACK BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.

THE 17th of August, 1662, was a sad day for London. To the last, many a citizen had hoped that the Act of Uniformity, in all its rigor, would not be enforced; but it was known now that in nearly every London pulpit the usual minister would preach for the last time on that day; and by six o'clock in the morning the city was astir, for every body was anxious to secure a seat; and long before seven every church door had an eager throng waiting outside for them to be thrown open.

Our old friends Launcelot and Audrey Aylmer decided to go and hear Dr. Bates, at St. Dunstan's, in Fleet Street, and, by favor of a friend, got in at a back door. The church was then half full, although the doors had not been opened to the crowd waiting outside.

"How sad and serious every body looks!" whispered Audrey, when they had taken their seats, and had time to look round the church.

Launcelot nodded. He was thinking of

what he had heard at Whitehall a month or two ago, and wondered how many in that throng would have been made sorrowful and anxious for the rest of their lives if these Presbyterian ministers had thought of themselves first, and their own ease, and consented to receive re-ordination. Not that he had any sympathy with them in their conscientious scruples, but the view taken of it by the man in the crowd at Whitehall ought to have been considered by Parliament, he thought, when drawing up the Act; for if the concession of these ministers would lead those whom they had married and baptized in all these years to doubt the efficiency of the rite performed, since the ministers were not properly ordained, then the only thing these men could do was to give up all, as they were doing. No wonder people grumbled and complained, for it was hard to think of these men sacrificing themselves as they were doing; and yet no other course seemed open under the circumstances. Launcelot was thinking more of this than of the service, or of the eloquent sermon that followed.

When it was over Audrey whispered: "I don't believe you know much of what he has been saying, although Bessie asked you to

remember all about it to tell her. Poor, dear Bessie! I wonder when she will be able to go to church again! That is where she jumped over," added Audrey, pointing to the middle of the gallery.

"Don't talk about it. I said I would never come to this church again. But now about the text; I really have forgotten it. The sermon was about a shepherd, I know; tell me what the text was."

"It was in the last chapter of Hebrews. I've learned it, so as to be sure of it for Bessie: 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Don't you want to learn it, too?" asked Audrey.

"O, no! and I don't see why Bessie should be so taken up with religion as she is. I don't like it; it isn't natural for a young girl like her; she isn't going to die yet; and you ought to cheer her up a bit, and get her to think of something else."

"Cheer her up!" exclaimed Audrey; "why, that is what she does for us. Religion does not make her dull, Launce. I've wondered sometimes what it can be—whether she hasn't had some secret communication from the king

about Aylmer Court; because when mother talks about it sometimes, as you know she will, Bessie smiles and says, 'Don't worry, mother; it will all come right in the end.' Do you think the king has heard of her illness, and sent to tell her secretly that he is working for us still?"

Launcelot shook his head.

"How could such a thing be possible? who could he send, so that we did not know all about the business?" he asked.

"There's that Puritan girl, Miss Maitland, who comes to see her so often. O Launce! I wonder whether her father is going to give up the living!" suddenly broke off Audrey. "There's a lot of children, I believe. Surely he would not be so foolish; do you think he would?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure but I should do the same, if I was a minister."

"O, Launce! I thought you were glad we were going to have our beautiful prayer book back again!" exclaimed Andrey.

"O I don't care much either way!" said her brother, carelessly. "I tell you, Audrey, there's only two things I do care for now—to get back Aylmer Court, and be revenged on Sir Harry Oaklands!" and, as he pronounced

the name, young Aylmer clenched his teeth and almost hissed out the words.

His sister glanced at his threatening face, and an indefinable feeling of terror crept over her.

"Bessie don't think he had any thing to do with Rosalind," she said, timidly.

"But he did, though; and he killed my father as surely as though he had struck him down with a dagger. You remember the story about that Carthaginian general who made his son swear eternal enmity to the Romans? Well, I have sworn to myself to be revenged on the man who has ruined my family!" said Launcelot, hoarsely.

"O, don't!" gasped Audrey; "what would Bessie say if she heard you talking like this?"

"She never will hear me, and you must not tell her, Audrey. I ought not to have told you, perhaps; but the words slipped out just because they are always in my thoughts, I suppose. But, mind, not a word must you say to Bessie. If she were quite well—if she were something different—I should like to talk to her as I always have done; but I can't now—not about this, at least; so pray you be careful, Audrey, or I shall not tell you of any of my secrets again."

"Very well, I promise," said Audrey, who felt flattered at the thought of being made her brother's confidante. Bessie had always been his chosen companion and the recipient of his confidences, and to take her place pleased her not a little. She never glanced at the responsibility involved in this—never asked herself, as Bessie often did, "What shall I do for his sake?" She felt now, as she walked by his side, an instinctive horror, as she thought of what he had said to her; but she would not say a word about it, for fear he should not trust her with a secret again.

When they reached home Bessie welcomed them with a pleasant smile, and asked about the text and the sermon, and whether Dr. Bates had said any thing about giving up the pulpit.

"O yes! it's all settled; and we could tell from the way he talked about the Lord Jesus being the chief Shepherd, that he was going to leave. But what about Mr. Maitland—that Puritan girl's father? Is he going to give up his living, too? They have got a lot of children, I think; and I don't believe they are very rich," added Audrey.

"I don't think they are. But what made

you think about Mr. Maitland? Have you seen Mary?"

"O no! Only all those Puritan ministers are so stupid, they wont use our beautiful prayer book; and I wondered whether he was like the rest," said Audrey.

"I don't know, I'm sure. I've not seen Mary for more than a week now. Would it make a great difference to them, do you think, Launce?" she said, turning to her brother.

"Unless he has a fortune, or can otherwise provide for them, they are just beggars," said Launcelot, bluntly.

"But couldn't he get another living in the country?" asked Bessie.

"How could he, my dear?" interposed Mrs. Aylmer. "This Act of Uniformity is to be enforced all over England to-day, and these Presbyterian ministers will not be allowed to preach anywhere again. I am very sorry for them," added the lady, with something of a patronizing sigh.

"O, mother, what will they do?" said Bessie, in a tone of distress. "I never thought of it in that way before; I thought they could go into the country. What will they do, Launce, do you think?" she asked, turning to her brother; for with his experience as a clerk

in the Navy Office he was supposed to know all about every thing.

"O, they'll get on somehow; you need not vex yourself about them," said Launcelot, carelessly.

"O, if we only had Aylmer Court again!" exclaimed Bessie, clasping her hands.

"We *will* have it!" said Launcelot, in a low, eager tone, as earnest in its intensity as her own. "It is the one thing I live for; and you shall go there yet, Bessie."

"And you will let Mr. Maitland be our chaplain, wont you?" said Bessie, quickly.

"I don't know. I don't care much about Puritans, and besides—"

"What are you two talking about?" asked Audrey, who had been helping her mother to set the dinner-table.

"Only the old topic—Aylmer Court. I've just got Bessie to say she wants to go back there," said Launcelot.

"Of course, I should like to go," said Bessie; "and we shall go, if it's good for us."

"There, I told you so; I knew what she would say," laughed Audrey. "She thinks we need not trouble ourselves about it, although I believe, if we could go there, she would soon be able to walk about again."

"Now, Audrey, come to dinner. We do not have venison pasty every day; so pray do not let it get cold," said Mrs. Aylmer, taking her seat at the table.

Launcelot had contrived a stand for Bessie's accommodation, so that she could take her meals lying on the broad bench in the wide bow-window, for there was no change in her condition—no return of strength to her lower limbs—although she seemed better in her general health than she had been previous to the accident.

Mrs. Aylmer had become a little more reconciled to her son's occupation by this time. Mr. Pepys had taken care to make his duties as light as possible, and had taken him with him when he went in his official capacity to prepare for the coming of the new queen at Portsmouth. Launcelot had hoped much from this visit at the time, for he felt sure he should have an opportunity of seeing and speaking privately to the king, and also find out something about the movements of Sir Harry Oaklands; for as yet he did not even know for certain whether he was in England, although he supposed he was about the court. In both these expectations, however, he was disappointed, for he had to return from Portsmouth

before the queen's actual arrival; and no one he ventured to speak to about it had ever heard of Sir Harry Oaklands being with the king.

But he had gone on nourishing his hatred against his supposed enemy, and hoping to obtain an audience of the king; and he had represented to his mother that at the Navy Office, and treated with the consideration he was by Mr. Pepys, he was more likely to obtain an interview with Charles than in any other way; and so Mrs. Aylmer had promised to rest content for the present as they were, although she had no more given up the hope of being reinstated in her old home than her son had.

His salary lifted them above actual want, and they had long since given up every luxury and learned to economize; so that Mrs. Aylmer was not at a loss how to contrive things for the best. It was not often that they indulged in the unwonted luxury of a venison pasty such as they had to-day; and so she was the more imperative in her commands that Audrey and Launcelot should take their places at table and Bessie be served while it was hot. Launcelot waited upon her, whispering as he set down the bright pewter plate by her side:

"I hope to serve you on silver, fair lady, before another August comes round."

"I am sure the pasty will not taste so good then, for no cook can make a pasty like my mother," said Bessie, with a smile.

"O, it is delicious!" said Audrey, who had no recollection of eating venison pasty before, and whose appetite had not been spoiled by rich food. But the dinner was not such an unmixed enjoyment to Mrs. Aylmer as it was to her children. Venison pasty had been a favorite dish with her husband, and scarcely a week passed but it had held a prominent place on the breakfast-table of Aylmer Court; and the well-known flavor brought back recollections of that time, and the tears rose to her eyes, and there came a choking sensation in her throat.

Launcelot, too, was very silent; for similar emotions had been stirred in his mind, and he thought, with bitterness, that but for the treachery of their pretended friend they might now be eating their dinner in their old home.

Audrey, however, was troubled by no such reflections. She was too young when they fled from their ancestral home to have more than a faint recollection of it; and so to her the dinner was an unalloyed pleasure, and she

ate and chatted and laughed, regardless of the fact that she only obtained short answers from her brother, and that her mother was quite silent.

When dinner was over Launcelot rose and prepared to go out. "Where are you going?" asked Bessie, wistfully, for he had formed the habit of going out as soon as his meals were over, and she was growing vaguely anxious about these aimless wanderings, for she knew he had no friends and had formed no friendships in London. "Couldn't you sit with me, Launce, this afternoon?" she said, timidly. "Mother and Audrey are going to church by and by."

But this was just what Launcelot was anxious to avoid. He could not enjoy a chat with Bessie as he once could. In her presence he felt vaguely uncomfortable. Her clear, earnest gaze seemed to have something reproachful in it whenever she looked at him; and so he never sat down to talk to her as he once did, but always made some excuse to get away.

He stammered confusedly now as he shook back his long flowing curls, and murmured something about not being away long. "I will just take a turn in Paul's Walk, and hear

what the gossips say about these Puritans being turned out of their pulpits," he said.

Paul's Walk, or the nave of St. Paul's Cathedral, was the general rendezvous for all sorts of people. It was the most popular medium of advertisement in those days, for attached to the pillars might be seen tradesmen's boards advertising their wares, or announcing a change of residence, or that they wanted apprentices or servants. Here attorneys and people of more questionable callings touted for customers among the throng who were constantly passing up and down this fashionable promenade, some to meet friends, some to discuss business, some for mere idle gossip and to learn the last court scandal; for the court was by no means unrepresented in this popular resort of the citizens, and gay noblemen and fashionable ladies would mingle with the crowd of meaner folk when it suited them.

It was this last fact which made it such a favorite lounge with Launcelot. Most of his spare time was spent now in pacing up and down Paul's Walk, in the hope of seeing or hearing something of Sir Harry Oaklands; but neither Bessie nor any one else knew what his motive was for going there, and his mother

was rather glad he found some pleasure outside their dull home; but Bessie was vaguely anxious, she knew not why, only she wished that Launcelot would sit with her sometimes, and not spend all his spare time in these wanderings up and down Paul's Walk.

CHAPTER XI.

A SHOCK FOR MARY.

"MARY, there's a knock at the door. We sha'n't have our quiet talk now, although Audrey has left us. "Come in," said Bessie, in a louder tone, and a little impatiently. But when the door opened, Bessie's face changed instantly, and she gladly welcomed her kind doctor, whom she had begun to regard as a friend as much as a medical adviser.

"I am so glad you have come to-day, doctor," she said, as she drew a chair to the side of her couch.

"Are you feeling ill, Mistress Bessie?" asked the doctor, taking her hand to feel her pulse. "You are looking very well," he added.

"Yes, I am well—quite well," said the girl. Mary and the doctor both looked at her with some surprise. "That is what I wanted to talk to you about," continued Bessie, in a hurried tone. "I am well enough now for mother to know all about it, and I want you to tell her."

"You want me tell her?" repeated the doctor, in assumed ignorance of what she meant.

"Yes, doctor; you know what I mean. I —I—cannot tell them myself that I shall always lie here like a useless log, and it hurts me to hear my mother talk of the time when I shall go to court, and dance a minuet with the queen's ladies."

"But who told you that you would not?" said the doctor, thinking that her brother must have betrayed the secret.

"No one has ever told me but the voice that never speaks falsely. I see you know it, too, doctor," she said, looking up into his face.

"My dear young lady, I am afraid your surmise is a correct one," said the doctor, in a grave tone; "but I did not wish you to know it yet—not until you had quite recovered from the shock, as far as recovery is possible—that is, until your general health is re-established."

"But I have known it for a long time," said Bessie, with a smile—"known it for a certainty; you need not think it is a mere surmise. This inward voice told me God wanted me to give up the power of moving about, lest I should stray from him, and not follow the holy Light he wished me to seek and fol-

low. It seemed a great deal to ask of a young girl like me, and just at first I prayed that I might get well again for my mother's sake; but the voice whispered that God could make it a blessing to my mother as well as me; and so, doctor, I want you to tell her, and Launcelot, too."

The doctor cleared his throat, and looked out of the window a minute before he spoke, and then, in a husky voice, he said: "And you think you can bear this great trial bravely?"

"I am not brave, doctor—don't think that; for I cannot tell my mother about it. I want you to do it for me; tell her I am content that it should be so now."

"What! content to lie here all your days!" exclaimed Mary. "Don't you think something more could be done for her, doctor?" she asked, almost imploringly, for she had learned to love Bessie Aylmer very dearly, and the news that she would never be able to walk about again had struck her like a blow.

But the doctor, though scarcely less touched than Mary herself, shook his head sadly. "I am afraid there is no hope of her ever regaining the use of her lower limbs," he said.

"And think how much worse it might have been!" put in Bessie. "I might have lost my

eye-sight, and then I could never have seen God's face in the river and fields, as I often see it now; and I can use my hands: I can make lace; and then, O! I can never make you understand the inward comfort and joy I have sometimes, when I think I have given all the running and walking I could ever do up to God himself. You have to walk about the world and do God's work in it a little bit every day; but God has just taken my walks all at once, instead of a bit at a time," added Bessie, with a smile, trying to cheer her visitors.

"You are right, Mistress Bessie, to look at it in that light; it is the only right way, I believe; and if any power on earth can help you to move again, it will be this calm, restful spirit. Fretfulness and impatience, although perfectly natural under the circumstances, would in themselves prevent all chance of a restoration; and that is why I have so carefully guarded, as I thought, all knowledge of the hopelessness of your condition from you."

"But if you are quite sure it is hopeless, doctor," interposed Mary, "then—"

"Have you never heard the old adage, 'Where there is life there is hope?' Mistress Bessie is young, too, and that might give her a chance; therefore I was bound to guard her

from a knowledge that I feared would deprive her of this chance, even though my opinion pronounced the case hopeless from the first."

"And it is better I should know it at once than go on trying to move my legs, and feeling disappointed and unhappy because I gain no power in them," said Bessie.

"Exactly," he answered; "and if any thing can prove I have been mistaken in this case, this quiet restfulness will do it," said the doctor.

"But to think of its being so hopeless," said Mary, looking compassionately at her friend.

"She is not hopeless," said the doctor, in a severe tone. "You hear, she does not even feel that she is forcibly deprived of the power to move about; she simply gives it up to God."

"Yes, that is it exactly," said Bessie. "I don't want to feel I have no choice in the matter. I want to realize that things are just as I would have them—that I have voluntarily given up the power of my feet to God—as freely as you have given me these flowers, dear," she said, holding up the posy Mary had brought her.

"You are fond of flowers?" said the doctor, thinking the conversation had been long enough on this topic, and anxious to turn it in another direction.

"So do I," said Mary; and then she went on to describe the gardens she had seen at Saye Court a few weeks before; and the doctor told of those at Hampton Court.

"There now, you see you give me the benefit of your eyes," said Bessie, with a smile; "and if I shut mine, I can just see those lovely gardens, with their flower-beds, without the fatigue of going to them."

"Which is a clear advantage gained, Mistress Bessie," said the doctor; "for I could scarcely enjoy Hampton Court gardens for the fatigue of walking so far in the sun. Now I must bid you good-morrow," he said, rising.

"But you will come again soon, and tell my mother?" said Bessie, eagerly.

"Yes, yes; I am not going to give you up as a patient yet; I want to watch your case, you know. But I told your brother the first time that I saw you, what I have now told you, that I feared you would never regain the use of your lower limbs."

"You told Launcelot that? O, I wish I had known. Poor Launce! it is that, then, that is making him so unhappy, so afraid to talk to me now. I am so glad I know it," added Bessie, her eyes filling with tears at the thought of her brother's unhappiness on her account.

"Perhaps it would be better for him to break the news to your mother?" said the doctor.

But Bessie shook her head. "I don't think Launce could do it," she said, anxious to save him pain. "I—I should be so glad if you would tell her the next time you come."

"Very well, then; it shall be as you wish. I will call again in a day or two, and see Mrs. Aylmer alone, if possible."

The two girls sat looking at each other in silence for a few minutes after the doctor had left. At length Mary said: "Why didn't you tell me this before, dear? You have had no one to talk to about it."

Bessie shook her head. "I don't think I could have talked about it before," she said. "It has just been a secret between my soul and God; and until I had got used to it—heard my voice whisper its comfort a good many times, and given it all up to God again and again—I don't think I could have spoken to any body without crying, and making you feel unhappy. But now, you see, I have got used to it more, and I am very good friends with my poor legs, instead of hating them, as I felt inclined to do at first."

"My poor Bessie, it is hard for you!" said

Mary, tenderly, the tears falling from her eyes as she spoke.

"Now, Mary, you'll make me a coward," said Bessie, drawing her friend closer to her. "Don't you think that God, who has given me your love, loves me quite as much as you do?" she asked.

"Yes, dear, I must believe it, although it seems strange love sometimes. So many things are happening just now that seem as though—"

"As though we could manage much better ourselves," interrupted Bessie. "Now, I'll tell you what I heard once and what I have been thinking of lately. A lady was doing some very beautiful tapestry work, and she said it was a picture of her life and every life. Looked at on the wrong side, it seemed all confusion and odds and ends of clipped threads; but see the other, and you know that every stitch had its purpose—that it helped to make the pattern perfect, and the dark shades were quite as needful as the bright ones. So it is with our lives. This world is the wrong side of life; we are working here often in the dark. We don't see the reason for the clipped threads, the broken purposes that looked so bright and good, and in their place did help to work out the pattern of our lives—we want to keep on

working with the bright golden threads; and when God clips them short off, and gives us darker days—darker stitches to weave in our life's tapestry—we grumble and complain—forgetting that the pattern is only seen on the other side—in the world of effects."

"What a wise old lady she must have been, to learn such a lesson from a piece of tapestry!" said Mary. "It is true enough, too. If our work is interfered with we think we could do it so much better if we were left alone. I have been thinking so lately," she added.

"It's about your father, isn't it, dear? Has he had to give up preaching?" asked Bessie.

"Yes, dear; preaching, and all his work in the parish. But, Bessie," she suddenly added, "don't you think that people—good people, I mean, who are trying to do their duty, and love and serve God—are often a puzzle to each other?"

"Perhaps they are," said Bessie. "Just now my brother is a puzzle to me. Only, now I have talked to the doctor, and I know he has heard that I shall never walk about like other girls any more, I think it may be explained; and you do feel so glad when it is some body you love, and you can understand all about them again."

"Yes, you do. But how can a misunderstanding be cleared up?" asked Mary. "I will tell you what I mean. You know my father is not rich, and having to give up this curacy has made us very poor; and I have learned lace-making to help things at home; but I can see it grieves my father dreadfully—"

"That you should have to work to keep the house?—I can understand that," said Bessie.

"But it is not that; he does not know that I am doing it for that, or I am afraid he would forbid it at once," said Mary. "It is because it is lace-making. I used to think the same at one time, and would not learn it until I felt quite sure it was right to do so."

"Did you really think it was wrong to make lace?" asked Bessie, incredulously.

Mary laughed at the astonished look in her friend's face. "Is it really so surprising to you?" she asked. "You know we do not wear it—at least not many, only a few old ladies, like my friend, Mrs. Hawkins. I wish you knew her," she added.

But Bessie returned to the subject under discussion. "To think you should have such thoughts about lace-making, when, as I have

heard my mother say, it has been a sclace and help to many a poor woman who could not otherwise help her family ; and I have thanked God dozens of times since I have had to lie here that if I could not use my legs I could make my fingers useful with my lace pillow."

"It does seem strange that good people should look upon the same things so differently," said Mary, with a sigh, thinking of her father's views about lace-making.

"I have heard my father say the same thing about the dreadful wars that drove us out of England. He knew some of the Roundheads were good men, and how they could take up arms against their lawful king he could not understand," said Bessie.

"But he was a tyrant who tried to subvert the laws, and would have brought back popery if he could."

"O, Mary, Mary, how can you speak of our martyr king like that?" said Bessie, in a pained voice, the tears coming into her eyes as she spoke.

"Bessie dear, I did not mean to hurt your feelings," said Mary, tenderly, smoothing the bands of fair hair ; "I did not know you felt so strongly about the king."

"I could not be an English girl if I did not

feel strongly about it," said Bessie, with a touch of anger in the tone.

"But I am English; and to me—"

"Don't—don't say any more!" interrupted Bessie, hastily; "this is one of the puzzles we can't understand, and I think we had better not talk about it."

It was the first jar that had ever occurred between the girls, and both felt it painfully. Mary rose to leave after a minute's silence, and Bessie did not press her to stay any longer. She felt she would rather be alone for a little while—rather not talk to Mary any more just now. Of course, she had heard all about the Puritans and their doings; but how a girl like Mary Maitland could ever entertain such thoughts as she did about their martyr king was the greatest puzzle of all.

CHAPTER XII.

CONFIDENCES.

WHEN Launcelot came home that evening Bessie beckoned him to her side and whispered eagerly: "You need not be afraid to talk to me, Launce; I know all about it."

Launcelot glanced at his sister and looked uneasy. "What nonsense has Audrey been telling you?" he asked, in a sharp tone.

"Audrey! she does not know it, does she? But the doctor said he told you some time ago."

"O!" uttered her brother, in a tone of relief.

Bessie looked at him keenly. "What were you thinking of, Launce?" she asked.

He muttered something in excuse, and said, hastily: "What made the doctor talk to you to-day?—what did he tell you, Bessie?"

"I told him I knew I should never walk again. I have known it a long time, Launce."

"Who told you?" demanded her brother,

angrily. "That meddling Puritan girl, I suppose!"

"How could she know it?" said Bessie, taking his hand, and stroking it tenderly as she whispered: "Don't you know, dear, I have begun to seek for the holy Light? and it seems to me we learn so much when—"

But Launcelot turned impatiently aside.

"Tell me what the doctor told you," he said, shortly.

"He said very little beyond confirming what I said—that my case is hopeless—was so from the first. He told you so, did he not?" said Bessie, trying to steady her voice and keep back her tears.

"Yes, he did; but I would not believe him, and it was cruel—brutal to tell you such a thing—a young girl with years of life before her; and I wouldn't believe it if I were you, Bessie."

But before Bessie could reply Audrey joined them in the window nook.

"What are you two whispering about?" she asked, looking from one to the other as she seated herself at the foot of Bessie's couch.

The tears were in Bessie's eyes, for she felt there was a difference in her brother's manner toward her, and his anger against the doctor

was rather to hide his own vexation at what she had said. Yet why should he be so angry —so anxious to shun this subject now? They had so often talked about seeking the holy Light together when they came to England, that why the bare mention of it should vex him so much she could not understand. She did not attempt to reply to her sister until Launcelot said: "Shall we tell her, Bessie?"

"Perhaps you had better," replied Bessie; "but the doctor has promised to come in and tell mother."

"Well, mother is out now; so whatever it is, she will not hear," said Audrey. "Is it about Bessie?" she asked.

"Yes; but mind I don't believe it, Audrey," said her brother, quickly. "When once we get back to Aylmer Court Bessie will get stronger, I feel sure; and she ought to believe it."

"Don't she believe it, then?" said Audrey, looking with some alarm at her sister.

"No, dear; I don't think I shall ever be better—ever be able to walk again," said Bessie, calmly.

Audrey glanced from one to another, as though she did not comprehend what was said, and then burst into tears. "I wont be-

lieve it," she said, through her sobs; "I wont, I can't believe it. Why, Bessie, you are getting better!" she protested. "Mother said only yesterday you were looking quite well and strong."

"And I am well," said Bessie, drawing her sister's head down upon her shoulder; "only, don't you see, I get no power in my legs. No, dear, I shall never be able to walk again!"

"O, Bessie, don't say it like that! Why don't you cry like I do, or get angry like Launce is, and then—and then—"

"What then?" asked Bessie, with a faint smile, smoothing Audrey's tumbled hair.

"O, I don't know; only it wouldn't seem so real, somehow!" and Audrey's tears flowed afresh. In a minute or two she looked up at her brother, who stood leaning against the wall. "You *must* get Aylmer Court now, for Bessie's sake!" she said, passionately. "Why don't the king let us have it?" she added.

"Because his mind has been poisoned against us," said Launcelot, in a calm tone; but his lips were rigid with anger, and he abruptly turned away and left his sisters to finish their talk by themselves.

After eating a slice of rye bread and swallowing down a horn of ale, he picked up his

hat and went out without speaking again to his sisters.

"Audrey, what can be the matter with him?" said Bessie, in a troubled whisper, as the door closed and they heard him going down the stairs.

Audrey shook her head, and turned to look out of the window. "He is always thinking about Aylmer Court, I believe; and it is a shame the king don't give it back to us," she said.

"He seems so full of anger and bitterness," said Bessie; "it makes him forget to be kind even to me;" and her tears fairly overflowed, not so much on account of missing her brother's kindness as for the change in himself.

"Don't cry, Bessie; he don't mean to be unkind, I'm sure. It's just because he is so fond of you, and can't bear to see you in this miserable place; and—"

"And yet he makes it harder for me to bear," sobbed Bessie, now fairly breaking down. The change in her brother had been a secret trouble to her for a long time; but now it was spoken of, it seemed as though all her firmness must give way, and the undefinable fears that had haunted her for weeks past found expression now.

"Hush, hush, Bessie," said Audrey, beginning to cry too. "I'm sure Launce don't mean to be unkind."

"But what is he thinking about? Why does he go to Paul's Walk every day? Can it be the king he hates so much?" demanded Bessie.

Audrey thought of what her brother had told her about Sir Harry Oaklands, but she would not tell her sister. "O! he's just thinking how he can get back Aylmer Court for us," she said, carelessly.

"But have you noticed, Audrey, that he always wears his sword again, now?"

"And why shouldn't he?" demanded Audrey. "All gentlemen wear swords; and Launce is a gentleman, although he has to do something in the Navy Office just now. Don't be silly, Bessie, and fret about nothing. Here is mother," she added, as the door opened.

Mrs. Aylmer glanced from one to the other suspiciously, seeing Bessie hastily wipe the tears from her eyes. "What is it? What has happened to upset you, my dear?" she asked, in some anxiety.

"She is fretting about Launce going to Paul's Walk so much, and wearing his sword again," answered Audrey, quickly.

"But, my dear, why should he not go to Paul's Walk, where he is likely to meet with some of the court? And as for wearing his sword, why would you have him go without it, as though he were not a gentleman by birth and right?"

Of course, Bessie had no satisfactory reason to urge against this, and she could not tell her mother of the vague fears that haunted her; and so she allowed her to think it was the mere fretful fancy of an invalid, and she even tried to think the same herself; but it was of no use. She became possessed by the idea that her brother was in some great danger. What it was she could form no conception of; but after she went to bed that night, she resolved to make this a special matter of prayer, that he might not quench the holy Light, which she was afraid he was doing, but learn to seek it, and give himself up to its guidance.

The weeks went on with little change in Launcelot, except that he shunned Bessie more; for he felt certain she was watching him keenly and anxiously, and it vexed and annoyed him. He felt sometimes that she was in some way holding him back from his purposes, aiding his enemy to escape from him; for his loungings in Paul's Walk had

been so far rewarded, that he knew now Sir Harry Oaklands was in London somewhere, and he longed the more intensely to take him by the throat, and tell him he was a traitor and a murderer, before running him through with his sword. Sometimes in his dreams at night he had his enemy at his mercy, saw the hated face grow white, and then purple, under his strangling grasp; but just as he was about to raise his sword something always hindered him. One night this terrible dream was more than usually vivid, and then he distinctly saw his sister Bessie snatch the sword from his hand.

The next morning Bessie said to him: "O, Launce, I have had such a horrible dream about you. I thought you were rushing toward a precipice, and I seized hold of your cloak to hold you back; but every moment I was afraid you would tear it out of my hand and rush on, and I knew you would be dashed to pieces if I did not hold you fast."

"And you were doing something in my dream, too," said Launcelot, as he hastily cut himself a slice of bread.

"What was she doing? Was she lame when she held you?" asked Audrey.

"O, I can't tell now," said Launce, quickly.

But he did not forget the dreams; they recurred to his mind often during the day, mixing themselves up with naval estimates, and obtruding themselves even while talking to Mr. Pepys and other officials at the Navy Office.

He went to lounge in Paul's Walk as usual, but somehow the gossip and court scandal were not so amusing to-day; and he went to walk in the direction of one of the city gates, intending to go to the fields beyond, when a sudden shower of rain drove him to take shelter in a narrow court. While he stood here—sheltered by the overhanging eaves—several people passed up the court; men and women decently dressed, but hurrying along in a furtive manner that aroused Launcelot's curiosity; and he resolved to follow them at last. There was no difficulty in doing this; for when he overtook them near a half-opened door at the top of the passage, one of them turned and said: "Friend, thou art welcome to worship with us."

Launcelot thought he had discovered a secret meeting of the ejected Puritans, and was half-disposed to turn back and go home; but it was still raining fast, and so he thought he would go in and wait until the shower was over.

Almost as soon as he was seated the whole company fell upon their knees; but no sound was heard for some minutes. Then a voice, trembling with impassioned earnestness, broke the stillness of the room; and a great cry went up to heaven, imploring God to have mercy upon sinners; to let them feel the stirrings of the Spirit, though dead in trespasses and sins.

"O, it is the penitent, the reformed, the lowly, the watchful, the self-denying and holy soul only that is the Christian," pleaded the speaker; "and that frame is the fruit and work of the Spirit which is the life of Jesus, whose life, though hid in the fullness of Christ in God the Father, is shed abroad in the hearts of them that truly believe according to their capacity." Then the speaker went on pleading with God for the outpouring of this Spirit, to strive in the hearts of men; and Launcelot listened spell-bound not merely to the words of the prayer—although they stirred him deeply—but the tones of the voice thrilled him; and he tried to see the speaker's face the moment he began to pray, but could not catch a glimpse of him.

As soon as the prayer was over he rose from his knees, anxious to assure himself that he was mistaken, that the voice bore some re-

semblance to the well-known tones he had so often longed to hear, but that the face was the face of a stranger, and not his enemy. But the next moment all doubt was set at rest by some one saying:

"Friend Oaklands will speak a word of exhortation;" and in a moment it came upon Launcelot that this was a Quakers' meeting.

He did not stay to hear the exhortation, but stumbled out, scarce seeing where he went, or understanding why he went. The rain was over, and the rough, uneven road was full of puddles; but he walked on toward the city gate in spite of the gathering dusk, and although link-boys were beginning to escort belated travelers. His mind was in a maze, in a sea of confusion; for never in his dreams of meeting Sir Harry Oaklands had he been like this. He had expected to see him the gayest of King Charles's gay court, flattered and courted; and he had pictured himself hurling him from this height, branding him as a coward and traitor, and afterward justifying his murder to the king. But here he was a Quaker. Could revenge ask more? Could disgrace be more complete? He had listened to the conversations between Mr. Pepys and Sir William Penn about his eldest son, and

heard how he had been expelled from Oxford, and sent abroad, for mixing himself up with these fanatics, and how disgraceful the whole affair was considered by every body concerned; and here was Sir Harry Oaklands, a gentleman far superior to the Penns, a courtier and boon companion of the king, not merely attending a Quaker meeting, but taking an active part in it, praying and preaching, and making himself amenable to the laws that had only recently been made more strict against such practices.

No wonder he forgot which way he was going—forgot his sword, and why he wore it so constantly of an evening — now lost in amazement as he was.

The watchman at the postern gate stopped him as he was going through, and reminded him that he would need a link-boy if he was going far beyond the city limits, which brought Launcelot back to some recognition of what was passing around him, and he thanked the watchman and turned back.

When he reached home, instead of sitting down to chatter to Audrey, as he had done lately, he went across to the window and sat down beside Bessie. She looked at him in some alarm, fearing she scarce knew what;

but even in the dusk she could see that his face was strangely perturbed.

At last he managed to whisper: "Bessie, I've had my revenge."

She started and looked at him. This, then, was the evil that had been threatening him; and all her prayers that he might be delivered from the evil had proved unavailing. The tears slowly gathered in her eyes, and she said, in a tremulous voice:

"Will you tell me about it, Launce?" nerving herself as she did so to listen to some tale of horror, as she glanced at the sword hanging at his side.

"I have seen Sir Harry Oaklands," he said, calmly.

She waited for him to say more, yet dreading to hear the next word, for her instinct told her it was against him that the hatred had been nourished.

"You saw him?" she said, at last, finding he did not speak. "Where—what was he doing?"

"Praying and preaching at a Quakers' meeting."

"But — but Sir Harry Oaklands is not a Quaker!" said Bessie, in a tone of eager anxiety.

"He is—he must be," said Launcelot. "Is not that revenge enough—to see him—my enemy—a ranting fanatic, taking his turn in the pillory or Bridewell with the rest of the rabble crew? O, Bessie! I shall sleep in peace to-night, although I have not touched him."

"But you have forgiven him?" said Bessie.

"Forgiven him!" repeated Launcelot; "not enough to touch him with my good sword, and save him from a ranting Quaker's fate. No, no! I am revenged in a sweeter, fuller way than I thought possible, and have not lifted my finger to bring it about. I shall be more content now; and you need not fret yourself, Bessie, that I shall do him any harm."

"But if you would only forgive him you would feel still happier," said Bessie, pleadingly.

Launcelot turned his head aside.

"You ask too much," he said, and left her.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOPES AND FEARS.

FOR a few days after his meeting with Sir Harry Oaklands Launcelot Aylmer seemed happier. He did not hurry off the moment he had swallowed his evening meal, but went and sat with Bessie in the window, watching the boats and barges as they passed up and down the river, but carefully avoiding all reference to serious matters. He did not mention Sir Harry Oaklands's name again; and Bessie tacitly understood that he wished to avoid the subject. The evenings were growing short now; and, as it seemed likely that they would have to spend the winter in their present abode, they had to think of how it could be made cozy and comfortable, especially the recess of the window where Bessie's couch stood. The room at present looked any thing but comfortable, for the dingy serge arras on the walls was torn and frayed in many places, and altogether so old that Mrs. Aylmer's efforts to darn and repair it were so

much labor in vain. To ask the landlord to put up new arras would be useless, neither could they afford to do it themselves. Launcelot suggested that they should take it all down, put the best of it together to make curtains for Bessie's window, and let the walls remain bare.

"It will be cleaner and better than this dirty old arras, I am sure," he said, holding up a tattered fragment of the serge.

"But how horrible the walls will look without hangings!" said Audrey, in dismay.

"But people do have walls without arras," said Bessie, who saw in the scheme something that was likely to employ Launcelot during the winter evenings, and take his mind off the bitter thoughts of revenge that she feared were not yet conquered.

"Yes; I have seen a room at Kensington Palace without arras; but it was covered with wall-paper, which, I hear, is becoming fashionable, and very much cheaper than cloth or velvet, or even serge," said Mrs. Aylmer.

"Why couldn't Launce try his fresco-painting here?" said Bessie; "it would be good practice for him, if the walls were made smooth—if it was just that side, Launce, that

I can see," she added, coaxingly, "it would make this room beautiful."

"Would you really like it, Bessie?" asked her brother, who was almost equally glad to find there was something he could do to please his sister, and yet would save him from being urged to seek that holy Light which he felt assured she had found, but which he shunned now, as asking too much of him.

"O, Launce, it would be delightful to watch you of an evening, making my bower beautiful for me!" said Bessie.

"But, my dear Bessie, he has so little time after he comes from the Navy Office," said Mrs. Aylmer.

But Bessie thought of the peril he would be in if he did not have some occupation in the evening, and she said, quickly: "There will be two or three hours after he comes home. We do not go to bed until eight o'clock."

"Then there will be paint and colors to buy," objected her mother.

"They will not cost much, mother," said Launcelot, who, now that the plan had been proposed, was eager to execute it. He had some skill as a painter, and had tried something of the kind in Flanders, and decided to

practice further on these walls, since it would please Bessie.

He spoke to the landlord the next day, who, knowing the arras was worn out and dropping to pieces, agreed to its being taken down, and promised to have the walls cleaned, if they did not want fresh cloth for hangings, which was an expense he could not afford. Launcelot said he would take it all down himself, to save as much trouble and cost as he could; and that very evening the work of dismantling the room of its dirty, moldering arras was commenced. It was not a pleasant task, for the mold and dust of years hung about it; and when it was down the walls looked bare and comfortless, and made Mrs. Aylmer shiver as she looked at them.

They looked better when they were cleaned and made ready for Launcelot; and Bessie was eager for him to begin his work of painting. She believed, if he could only become thoroughly taken up with this work, the demon of revenge would gradually be cast out of his heart. It was not the highest and best way of subduing it, but the best possible for her brother now, she thought; and by this lower rung in the ladder—by this work—he might mount higher; and so she thanked God, and

took courage, and did all in her power to soothe her mother under the discomfort of living with bare walls, and encouraged Launce to persevere with his task.

So the weeks of autumn and winter passed more cheerily than could have been expected. Launcelot's salary kept them in comparative comfort—at least, they did not want for any thing actually necessary; although Mrs. Aylmer frequently sighed as she looked at Bessie lying so helpless on her couch, and thought of their old home, and of the facilities that would afford for lightening the poor girl's affliction.

Bessie herself never complained—never expressed a wish to go back to Aylmer Court. She was willing to talk about it when she saw that it pleased her mother; but even when, as sometimes happened, she could not help longing for a peep at the world beyond the glimpse afforded by her window, she carefully restrained all expression of it, for fear of arousing fresh discontent in her mother and Audrey.

She thought she saw signs in her brother that this life of stern duty and hard work was good for him—better than a life at court; for she feared now that if they had continued in the favor of the king, and Launcelot had be-

come a courtier, he would have been little better than the gay, reckless gallants that were often the terror and scandal of quiet citizens, who beat the watch at night, and set all law and order at defiance. They did not hear much court news now, but the little that did reach them made Mrs. Aylmer shake her head and murmur that things were not so when she attended the court. The citizens were making loud complaints of the king's extravagance, and how he thought of nothing but his own pleasures. Some, Launcelot said, went even so far as to say they had been too hasty in inviting him to take the throne.

"He ought never to have been deprived of it, and then he would not have learned wicked French ways," said Mrs. Aylmer, who always found an excuse for the king, if she could not justify his doings. But even she was becoming aware that this English court was no fit place for pure-minded girls like her daughters; and so she talked less about Audrey going to court, and more about the pleasures of a simple country life, and thus whiled away the dull wintry days, while her fingers were busy mending, altering, and contriving, so that they should maintain an appearance of respectable if faded gentility, which Bessie's nimble fin-

gers with her lace pillow also helped them to keep up.

Launcelot occasionally brought home little scraps of gossip of things that were occupying public attention, and among them was the news of a projected Act of Indulgence, that would give liberty to worship God not only to Puritans, but to Papists also. The king was known to favor this, for the queen was a Papist, of course; and the queen-mother, who had now returned to England, was surrounded by Roman Catholics, who were eager to see their faith triumphant again in the country, and saw in this Act of Indulgence the beginning of the end to be accomplished.

Mrs. Aylmer shook her head when Launcelot told them that this was the story being talked about in London. "My dear, the king would never try to bring back popery," she said. "The queen-mother is a French princess, and a Catholic, of course; but Charles—"

"He don't care a groat which religion is uppermost, so long as his pleasures are not interfered with," said Launcelot, quickly; "but he wants to keep on good terms with France; and those about the queen-mother's court are constantly intriguing, they say, to bring back the old religion."

"O dear, I should not like that; should you, mother?" said Bessie. "Do you really think there is any danger of it, Launce?" she asked, turning to her brother.

"Well, I don't know. You see, if they pass this Act of Indulgence, and the queen and her ladies, and the queen-mother and her court, go publicly to a Roman Catholic church, others will go too,—people who don't care much about religion at all; but this will help to make it fashionable, you see; and so the thing will grow gradually, until the people come to like the music and singing and splendid vestments better than plain Puritanism or the Church of England."

"But it will be for the Puritans as well as Papists," said Bessie, thinking of her friend Mary Maitland's father. She had not seen her very recently, for there had been some coolness consequent upon their conversation about the late king, which neither had quite got over yet; but she had begun to long for a visit from Mary now, and Launcelot's talk made her very welcome when she came, a few days afterward.

"I have been waiting to see you," said Bessie, eagerly, when Mary came in. They had generally had the room to themselves before,

but Mrs. Aylmer and Audrey were both at home to-day; and, although they had long since made up their minds that they did not like Mary because she was a Puritan, they too welcomed her as a friend of Bessie. It was too cold now to sit apart in the window, and Bessie's couch was near the fire to-day; and so they all sat together, and the conversation became general. Bessie began it by asking whether Mr. Maitland had another curacy yet.

"O no; you see the Act of Uniformity will prevent him from preaching in any church," said Mary, with a faint color rising in her cheeks as she recalled the last conversation.

"But this Act of Indulgence that is talked of will alter all that," said Mrs. Aylmer, looking up from her work.

"My father hopes it will not pass," said Mary, faintly.

"But it would enable him to preach again, would it not?" asked Mrs. Aylmer.

"O yes; and that is why I cannot help hoping it will become law. It is not that we have lost our means only, but my father seems unhappy without his accustomed work. He used to hold a little meeting in a house among the very poor people, and when he found the new curate did not go near that part of the

parish, he thought he might resume that without offending any body, and I was so thankful there was something he could do again; but last week he was warned that if he did not give it up he would be punished."

"I suppose you have sufficient to live upon?" said Mrs. Aylmer, glancing at Mary's neat warm cloak and hood.

"O yes; there always is just sufficient. My father does a little scrivener's work sometimes, and I have learned to make lace, and can sell it."

"But surely that is not all you have to depend upon?" said the lady.

"Yes, it is. You see my father was only a curate, and never had a very large stipend—enough to live in comfort and help the poor a little, but not enough to save much," said Mary.

"And now you say he hopes this Act of Indulgence will not pass, although it would enable him to take a church and place you all in comfort?" said Mrs. Aylmer.

Mary nodded, and the tears rose to her eyes. How could she tell these people, who were not her friends like Bessie was, that she feared her father was mistaken in his opposition, but that he was doing all in his power to arouse

the public feeling against this measure, though he could earn but the barest pittance now; and, work as long as she might, lace-making would barely save them from actual starvation? When she first heard of this proposed Act of Indulgence, how delighted she was. "I thought all our troubles were over," she said, speaking to Mrs. Aylmer, "when I heard there was a chance of my father being able to preach again; and he thought the same at first, I think. But now he is afraid if this Act of Parliament becomes law, the Papists will—"

"Why, that is just what Launce says," interrupted Audrey. "He told us the other night we should all be Papists again soon."

"Did he really say so? Do people really think that?" exclaimed Mary, in a tone of surprise.

"Is not that what your father fears?" asked Mrs. Aylmer.

"Yes; but I thought it could not be so bad, and I said it was only fair that the Papists should be able to worship God as they liked."

"My dear, they can do that in their own private chapels," said Mrs. Aylmer, who began to feel more kindly disposed toward Mary,

as she saw the signs of trouble in her gentle face. "I am speaking of the queen and the queen-mother, who are both Catholics—they can do this now; and if they would leave off intriguing—or rather, if the pope did not send emissaries to England to try and re-establish his power here—they might be able to have freedom to worship God publicly; but if they did that now, the Romish faith would soon be fashionable again, and no one could tell what would happen next. No, no; we cannot afford such religious liberty as that yet; but it is hard to think that your father should be deprived of his to secure us against the other."

"O, I am so glad to hear you say this," said Mary, with a sigh of relief. "My father thinks the same, I know; but"—and there she stopped short, and the color rose to her cheek again, for she knew she had thought less about this public matter than she did of their own straitened means—"I am afraid I thought more of—of things at home than of the good of the country," she added, in a faltering tone.

"It was quite natural, I am sure, my dear," said Mrs. Aylmer. "You have younger brothers and sisters, too, have you not?"

"Yes, four. They are very good and brave,

and try not to give me any trouble; but they cannot quite understand why they should not have dinner every day, as they used to do," said Mary, trying to smile, although there was a mist in her eyes as she recalled the little hungry faces at home.

"My dear, is it as bad as that?" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer, in a tone of tender compassion that quite upset poor Mary's firmness.

"It is worse—worse for my father!" she sobbed; "for he will eat scarcely any thing now."

"And yet you say he hopes this Act of Indulgence will not pass, when it would lift him out of all this trouble!" exclaimed the lady.

Mary dried her eyes, and smiled then—smiled triumphantly. "He is doing all he can to prevent it," she said; "and I will help him now. I am afraid I have been a great trouble to him lately, but I did not know the danger was so real. I am so glad I came here to-day; it will help me to bear up, now I know it is a real danger we are struggling against."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VICTORY OF THE VANQUISHED.

MARY did not pay a very long visit. For one thing, she could not afford to lose the time from her lace-making; and now she had heard from Mrs. Aylmer that this proposed Act of Indulgence was, as her father declared, the thin edge of the wedge to introduce Popery again, she was anxious to go back and assure him of her sympathy in his efforts to get it defeated in the House of Commons. Hitherto she had done all she could to persuade him that the proposal was intended to soften the rigor of the Act of Uniformity—a message of peace from the king in his justly-offended Puritan subjects; but since the Aylmers took the same view of it as her father, and saw in it an attempt to re-introduce popery, she felt that the danger must be real indeed, and blamed herself severely for being so blinded by her selfishness as not to perceive it before, or believe her father's assurance that that was the secret of the king's

anxiety for its passage through the Commons.

But as she walked homeward that wintry day, and thought of the scanty fire at home, and the poor fare, and how all this might be altered if the proposed Indulgence could only become law, she could not help wishing that her first thought of this measure had been the true one; for O! it was hard to sit, day after day, working her bobbins and thread, and then barely able to keep the wolf from the door.

But while she was ruminating thus sadly, the Aylmers were eagerly discussing how they could help her, out of their slender means. Mrs. Aylmer had been deeply touched. "My dear Bessie, I never thought these Puritans could be so brave and true to their country," she said. "I have always looked upon them as a miserable, low-minded set, who only thought of themselves and their whining religion; but here is this man, while his children are wanting bread, deliberately pushing it away from himself and them, rather than see the country endangered by popery again; and that girl lifting her head, and smiling so proudly, when she was convinced that her father was in the right. She looked like a

queen; and I shall always love and honor her, Puritan though she may be."

"My father said there were some good men among the Puritans," Audrey ventured to say.

"But being good men, how could they be Roundheads?" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer.

"Don't you think we ought to help poor Mary, now they are in such trouble?" said practical Bessie, knowing by experience that little good would follow, if the discussion drifted in the direction of the political differences that divided them.

"My dear, I should be glad to help her if I could; but what can we do? If we only had Aylmer Court now, I would make him my chaplain directly," said Mrs. Aylmer.

"Thank you for that promise," said Bessie, smiling; "but while we are waiting until we can keep a chaplain, don't you think we could do something?"

"What could we do? I assure you, sweetheart, Launcelot's money barely enables us to keep out of debt; and you know the Aylmer motto," said her mother.

"But I do owe Mary something—I owe her a great deal," said Bessie, "if it were only for the time she has spent talking to me. Don't

you think I might make some lace for her?" she added, timidly.

"Make lace to sell!" exclaimed Audrey.

"Yes, why not? You have enough to wear for the present," said Bessie.

"But to work for money—to sell the lace you make!" said Audrey, in great disgust.

"But Mary does it," said Bessie.

"But she is not Mistress Aylmer," said her mother, with some dignity.

"No; but she was Mistress Maitland, a minister's daughter, whom you say you can love and honor for her brave devotion to her country."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Aylmer, hastily; "but there is a great difference between you."

"Yes, I am afraid there is," said Bessie, sadly. "I am afraid if I had little to eat I should think more of how I could get bread easily than of England turning to popery again. I should never be so brave as Mary."

"She is brave, and I honor her for it," said Mrs. Aylmer.

"Then let me make some lace, to show we do honor her, and are willing to help her in the struggle. She could sell it with her own I dare say, and nobody need know any thing about it," said Bessie, eagerly.

"But what could you do? It is such a little thing for an Aylmer to give! O, if we only had our own again!" exclaimed the lady, fervently.

"Well, then, perhaps we should never have heard of Mary Maitland, or known that these non-conforming ministers were such brave, true patriots," said Bessie. "But I could make some lace and give to Mary, and she would feel and know then that we do sympathize with her. It would almost seem like helping to save England from popery myself," added Bessie, pleadingly.

"Well, sweetheart, you shall make the lace if you wish," said Mrs. Aylmer, at last. "I have plenty for our own use; and if it only pays for a few dinners for those poor children, it will be better than nothing, perhaps; only it is not what an Aylmer should do—work for money, even to give away."

But even this half-grudging concession satisfied Bessie, and her lace pillow was soon placed before her, and her nimble fingers plied the bobbins more industriously than ever; and thus the wan, cold days of January and February slipped away, and men were talking more and more of the king's plan for indulging weak consciences, which Parliament was as

eagerly discussing, and many, like Bessie, secretly hoped would soon pass into law; for it was so hard to think of poor ministers, like Mr. Maitland, being turned out with their families.

But, to the relief of many of those who loved their country more than life, the measure was thrown out by the House of Commons, in spite of the court influence that was brought to bear upon it. The active and secret Popish intrigues going on at the court of the queen-mother were sufficient to rouse the alarm of all true Englishmen; and, at the risk of offending the king, who had suddenly shown such tender concern for the consciences of his subjects, they refused to make a law that would give any advantage to Papists.

Many a poor minister, looking at his pale, hungry-eyed children, doubtless felt a pang of disappointment when they heard the news; but then, too, there were brave hearts, who, like Mr. Maitland, could thank God for his mercy to England, even though that "mercy" meant the slow martyrdom of poverty and hunger for themselves and their little ones.

Bessie could not help feeling disappointed for her friend when she heard the news, and she worked more industriously than ever at her lace pillow to help her.

But as the spring advanced the old anxiety about Launcelot crept back into Bessie's life. During the winter he could do little beyond drawing the outlines of his projected fresco-painting; but both had looked forward to the light evenings, when color could be added. And now this time had come, the old restlessness seemed to have taken possession of her brother again; and, instead of turning to his self-appointed task when he came home from the Navy Office, he ate his supper with all possible dispatch and then hurried out. Mrs. Aylmer felt no uneasiness about this. To her it was quite natural that Launcelot should want to go and lounge away an hour in Paul's Walk; and she thought Bessie very unreasonable when she ventured to express her disappointment at the painting being given up just now. But Bessie did not believe her brother spent his time in Paul's Walk, although she did not say so. She was afraid he went to watch the Quakers' meeting-house, near Aldersgate, once more eager to revenge himself upon Sir Harry Oaklands; and her heart was filled with sorrow and disappointment as she thought how all her well-laid plans had failed, just when she felt most secure of success. O, how she wished she had the use of her limbs,

and could accompany him in these evening walks! Her very presence, she felt sure, would deter him from committing any rash deed; but now she felt so helpless, so useless; and she thought she had seen something in Launcelot lately that indicated a struggling toward the higher life—a reaching after the holy Light that he had seemed to turn his back upon. But if this feeling of bitter revenge once more crept back to his heart, there would soon be an end to the struggle, and then— At this point Bessie burst into tears, which was but the avenue of prayer, and, after once more commending him to God, she felt comforted.

Indeed, if she had only known it, she had much cause for comfort and thankfulness; for it was a mixed feeling, rather than one of bitter hatred, that took Launcelot back to the neighborhood of the Quakers' meeting-room. He wanted to see his foe in his humiliating position once more, as he told himself; but there was also a secret feeling underlying this, that he himself was scarcely conscious of, and certainly would not have acknowledged even to himself, and that was a desire to hear more of what these strange people would say at their meetings. They were so thoroughly in earnest

—believed so fully in the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of man—that he felt curious and eager to hear more of their doctrine and preaching; and so he went once again to the little meeting-house, hidden away behind the larger buildings near Aldersgate.

But this time he saw nothing of his foe: a stranger engaged in prayer and exhortation; and Launcelot persuaded himself that he was disappointed at not seeing the polished courtier demean himself among these humble folk; but he, nevertheless, listened with rapt attention to the earnest prayers and the address that followed, and came again and again to the little meeting-house.

These meetings had to be carried on in secret, for more than once had the sheriffs entered this very room and carried off to prison those whom they considered the leaders of the movement; and the authorities were again watching for an opportunity to make another raid upon the place, and Launcelot unwittingly helped them. They watched him several times turn into the little passage leading to the meeting-room, and at length followed him, but did not enter the room at once. That evening Sir Harry Oaklands was present, and again led the devotions; but Launcelot had almost

forgotten that it was the man he had sworn to be revenged upon, as he sat and listened to the words of life that fell from his lips; and it was not until the sheriff and his men entered the room, and rudely seized hold of the preacher and several other members of the meeting, that Launcelot remembered who he was. Then the more kindly feelings of other days asserted themselves, and, instead of rejoicing over the trouble that had befallen him, he hastily stepped forward, and demanded why they arrested his friend.

"Launcelot Aylmer, if I am not mistaken?" said the prisoner, in a tone of wondering surprise.

The sheriff's men turned upon him in no less wonder. "Thou dost crow loudly for a canting Quaker," said one, eyeing Launcelot's dress and sword rather curiously.

"Unhand Sir Harry Oaklands, and we will let these knaves know whether we are Quakers," said Launcelot, grasping his sword as he spoke.

"Nay, nay, friend; I deny it not. Put back thy sword. But I thank thee for the kindness that bid thee raise thine arm in my defense," said Sir Harry, quickly. He had yielded himself without the least resistance to the hands

of his assailants, who handled him much more roughly than was needful, until they heard his name and title, when they somewhat relaxed their grasp, and allowed him to hold out his hand to Launcelot.

But Launcelot hesitated. It was one thing to defend a foe, but quite another to take his hand in amity and good fellowship ; and, instead of grasping it, he said : " I should like to have a word with you first, Oaklands."

Sir Harry looked surprised and greatly hurt. " Haven't you seen Rosalind ? " he asked.

" Seen Rosalind ! " repeated Launcelot, fiercely. " Have you given any body a chance of seeing her ? "

" Yes, certainly ; I brought her to London away from the king, and placed her in safety until you could claim her," said Sir Harry.

Then Launcelot held out his hand. " Forgive me," he said, " for misjudging you ! Bessie always said I was mistaken."

" How is Bessie ? " asked Sir Harry, as he grasped Launcelot's hand once more.

But the sheriff interposed at this point. His time was too valuable to stand listening to the reminiscences of old friends, and he bade his men clear the room, and secure their

prisoners preparatory to taking them to Bridewell.

The room was already cleared of all but the unwelcome intruders and those whom they had seized; for the rest had been glad to make their escape as soon as they saw the sheriff—all but Launcelot, whose dress and sword and un-Quaker like pugnacity toward the sheriff's men had saved him from arrest.

"Come here out of curiosity, or to see your friend, I suppose?" said the sheriff, as they were preparing to march away with their prisoners.

"Have you been before, Launce?" asked Sir Harry, unconsciously dropping into the old form of address as Launcelot walked close by his side.

"Two or three times," he replied, evasively. "I wanted to see you again."

"Did you know I should be there? Who told you I was a Quaker? I see none of the court now," said Sir Harry.

"Hush! don't speak so loud; we'll talk another time. I wonder whether they will accept me as bail for you. They will take you before the lord mayor, I expect?"

"I suppose so; but it does not matter," said Sir Harry, indifferently.

"But three months in Bridewell would," said Launcelot, "and I will save you from that, if I can."

"It is not the first time I have been arrested and imprisoned; and why should I escape, when my friends are punished for no crime except obeying the law of God, and refusing to obey the ordinance of man? Trouble not thyself about me, but seek for holiness for—"

"No preaching, an it please thee," interrupted the sheriff, roughly. "If the lord mayor will take thy friend as bail to-morrow morning, well and good; but I suffer no Quaker discoursing in mine ears."

"Nay, Master Sheriff, thou hast heard none," said Launcelot, quickly. "We have but discoursed of old times, when we were friends together, and that thou canst testify to-morrow. What time will the court sit?" he asked; for he thought it would be better for both of them that he should leave now, and he hurried home to tell the news.

CHAPTER XV.

ROSALIND.

BEFORE Launcelot reached home doubts crept into his mind as to the wisdom of so readily accepting as true the explanation given by Sir Harry Oaklands about the sudden disappearance of himself and his cousin from Flanders; and yet, after listening to him, as he had done twice, at these Quaker meetings, how could he suspect him of the vile treachery he once thought he had committed? He went in looking gloomy and sad; and Bessie, who was always on the lookout for his return in the evening, at once noticed how disturbed he looked.

"What is it, Launce? what has happened?" she asked, anxiously. "Have—have you seen Sir Harry Oaklands again?"

"Seen him and spoken to him," replied her brother. "Bessie, he says Rosalind is here in London," he added.

"Then mother was right, after all," said Audrey, "and she did see her in the street one day."

"Saw who?" asked Bessie and Launcelot in the same breath.

"Cousin Rosalind. O dear! mother said I was not to say a word," suddenly exclaimed Audrey.

"Where did mother see her?" demanded Launce. "I think I ought to have been told at once," he added, in an injured tone.

"It could do no good to talk about it, mother said; for she could not be quite positive it was Rosalind: she only saw her for a minute in Wood Street."

"But mother ought to have told me. When did this happen?" demanded her brother.

"Two or three weeks ago. Mother felt sure Rosalind saw her, and hurried along to get out of the way, as though she did not wish to see her."

"What nonsense you are talking, Audrey, as though she would not be glad to see mother!" said Launcelot, haughtily.

"I am only telling you what mother said," replied Audrey. "She tried to overtake Rosalind, but she almost ran to get out of her way."

"What did Sir Harry Oaklands say about her?" ask Bessie.

"There was no time to listen to partic-

ulars; the sheriff had arrested him, and would not wait."

"The sheriff arrested Sir Harry Oaklands!" repeated Audrey, whose recollection of the gay, handsome courtier who used to visit them in Flanders, made the mention of "sheriff" and "arrest" in connection with him seem utterly absurd.

"Yes; he was hauled off to Bridewell this evening, and is to be taken before the lord mayor in the morning. I wish I could find out something about Rosalind at once!" he added, with a deep-drawn sigh.

Bessie looked up into his face anxiously, and slipped her hand into his.

"You have forgiven him, Launce, haven't you?" she whispered.

He started at the question; and then, looking gently at the pale, anxious face, he said: "Something has killed all the hatred that I felt toward him. I almost forgot that I ever meant to kill him when I saw him to-night."

"O, Launce! you are seeking the holy Light, then?" said Bessie, joy beaming in her face.

"I don't know—I don't feel sure about any thing; I almost blame myself for believing him so readily; but somehow I could not

doubt him then; and he shook hands as in the old days, and I promised to be bail for him to-morrow."

"I am so glad, I could almost jump," said Bessie, the tears shining in her eyes.

But Launcelot felt little of the joy of a victor, although he had conquered in a struggle that had threatened to maim his whole life, if it had not been fought out, and righteousness gained the day. He was full of doubt and perplexity still, when Mrs. Aylmer returned from a visit she had just been to pay Mary Maitland. See, too, was looking anxious and perturbed, and the ever-watchful Bessie noticed it at once, and thought there must be fresh trouble in her friend's home.

"Is Mary ill, mother?" she asked.

But Mrs. Aylmer only shook her head, and for a minute or two could only look at the wondering group in silence. At length she said, in a trembling voice: "I have seen Rosalind."

"O, mother!" exclaimed all three in a breath; but Bessie was the first to recover her senses sufficiently to think of her mother.

"Launce, get a little of that Canary the doctor brought me. Mother, you must take some," she added, as Mrs. Aylmer feebly pro-

tested that she did not want it. "Now, Audrey, take mother's hood away, and fetch the footstool," she said, taking the direction of affairs, so as to give her mother time to recover from her emotion. Mrs. Aylmer drank a little of the Canary, and soon recovered her usual equanimity, while Launcelot sat eagerly waiting for her explanation, but afraid to ask a single question.

"Yes, I have seen Rosalind," resumed Mrs. Aylmer; "she is living with Mary Maitland."

"O, mother! and Mary never told us!" exclaimed impulsive Audrey.

"Mary did not know we should feel any interest in the young governess her father took into his house out of charity," said Mrs. Aylmer, with a quiver in the proud tones of her voice as she pronounced the word "charity."

Launcelot started to his feet; "Rosalind a governess!" he exclaimed. "Oaklands never told me that; I will make him smart for this—"

"Launce, sit down and hear me out," commanded his mother. Sir Harry Oaklands behaved like a gentleman; he treated the foolish girl with every consideration and respect; but, for her own sake, he was bound to find her another home than his; and where could he

place her better than with a minister who, among all parties, bore the character of being a kind-hearted gentleman?—yes, and he is a gentleman!" added the lady, vehemently.

"But, mother, you have not told us all," said Audrey.

Mrs. Aylmer shook her head.

"I wish I had no more to tell," she said, with a sigh; "but I tell you once for all, and then we must try and forget it. Rosalind got tired of our poverty, it seems, and very readily agreed to leave us, and go with the king to Paris, where the foolish girl believed wealth and splendor awaited her. Sir Harry Oaklands heard of the plot, and resolved to rescue her even against her will, and brought her here to London, where they were already talking of inviting the king to come back. He placed her in lodgings with an elderly gentlewoman, thinking we should speedily return. Meanwhile he fell in with some Quakers, and soon joined their society, and, of course, tried to bring Rosalind to his way of thinking whenever he went to see her. Things went on very well for some time, until the old lady died, and Sir Harry lost nearly all he possessed through being a Quaker, when, finding we had not returned, he placed her with this Mr. Maitland,

telling him she was an orphan, whose only friends were in Flanders, but not mentioning our name. So you see Mary knew nothing of her being our relative; and if she heard our name mentioned, she never said she knew us; for when she saw me one day in Wood Street she tried to get away before I could recognize her."

Launcelot heaved a deep sigh as his mother concluded her story. "It seems almost impossible to believe such a tale of Rosalind!" he said, in a tone of bitter disappointment.

"I wish it had been a stranger I had to tell such a story about; but she is my sister's child, and poor Mary was not a brave woman, so we must be merciful to this poor, silly Rosalind," said Mrs. Aylmer, feeling that Launcelot was likely to be too severe in his judgments upon the culprit.

"I am bitterly grieved and humiliated," he said, shading his eyes that they might not see the emotion he felt.

"Yes; but you must not let it make you unjust," said his mother. "You must remember that, to us, our poverty was a voluntary renunciation of wealth and luxury for the sake of our king, and we bore it bravely. You, my children, bore your part nobly," added the

lady, with a quiver in her voice; "but, to Rosalind, the little contrivances we had to make, and the privations we were obliged to submit to, were so many grinding, degrading shifts that she hated and constantly rebelled against."

"And she often had little things that we did not," put in Audrey.

"Yes, my dear, I know she had; for I felt it would do you less harm to be deprived of some little luxury than it would her; but all my efforts to make her more content with her position were in vain. I could not make her feel and see that poverty was a noble thing, if nobly borne; and she was ready to welcome any escape from it."

"But what about her now?" asked Launcelot. "Is she living with the poor minister's family still?"

"Yes; but she is helping them now, I am happy to say. She is the 'friend' who taught Mary lace-making; and if any thing can help her to become a noble woman, it will be living with such a family as these Maitlands."

"How are they getting on?' he asked.

"Mary says she is learning to work faster, and they can sell all the lace they make; she and Rosalind both have pillows now. She almost cried when I gave her what you had

made, Bessie, and bade me not let you make any more, for fear of hurting your back."

"As if any thing could hurt me now," said Bessie, with a low, soft laugh.

"Is Rosalind coming to see us?" asked Audrey, with a glance at her brother.

"Nothing was said about it," replied Mrs. Aylmer. "Mr. Maitland was much surprised when he heard that I was her aunt, and that she had seen me so recently in Wood Street."

"What did she say about that, mother?" asked Audrey,

"Well, I think she is honestly ashamed of herself; and this, you know, is often the first step to something better. She certainly could not be in better hands than she is; for Mr. Maitland can make every allowance for her rash folly, without bating one jot of the horrible sin it had almost led her to commit. Now, sweethearts, we will let the matter drop for awhile," added the lady.

"Does she know that the king will not speak to any of us now?" asked Audrey.

"I did not tell her," my daughter.

"Having heard all this, we know that Sir Harry Oaklands was not the mischief-maker we supposed," said Bessie, after some minutes' silence.

"Yes; the mystery is explained now," said Launcelot, with a sigh, looking as though any other explanation would be preferable to this; and then he hastened to turn the subject by telling his mother of his meeting with Sir Harry Oaklands, and his promise to be bail for him the next morning.

"I am glad you did, my son," said Mrs. Aylmer; "not that I like Quakers and sectaries, but I always liked Sir Harry, and it may be we shall be able to show him the folly of these notions. I only hope the lord mayor will accept you as bail," she added.

Launcelot looked suddenly dismayed. This reminded him of a fact that he had previously forgotten, in spite of frequent reminders—that he was no longer Aylmer, of Aylmer Court, but simply a subordinate clerk in the Navy Office. "Do you think they will refuse to accept me as bail?" he said.

"I should think not," said his mother. "You will tell them you are a clerk in the Navy Office."

Launcelot looked at Bessie, then at his mother, in surprise. It was clear that the discipline of the last few months had not been without its uses to her as well as to himself, or she could not so calmly have told him to pro-

claim his disgrace—as she held all work to be only a few months before. "Very well, mother," he said; "I will do what I can for Sir Harry."

He had to go to the Navy Office in the morning, before attending the sitting of the lord mayor's court, to ask Mr. Pepys for leave of absence for a few hours; for that gentleman kept a sharp eye upon his clerks, and there was no shirking the work under his control. But, at the same time, he was always ready to meet any reasonable request of his clerks, and so it was with the fullest assurance that it would be granted that Launcelot made his request.

But for once Mr. Pepys looked dubious. "Quakers again!" he repeated, testily; "you had better have nothing to do with them, Aylmer."

"But this man is my friend, and has been of signal service to a relative; therefore—"

"Well, well, do as you like; only, you know, every body hates these Quakers, and I thought you wished to stand well with the king," said politic Mr. Pepys.

"That is all over now, sir; and, besides, it is my duty to stand by Sir Harry Oaklands, whatever he may be. But why should the Quakers be hated so much?" he asked, earnestly.

Mr. Pepys shook his head. "They're a troublesome lot of people—not at all respectable. Sir William Penn has sent his son to Paris that he may forget the pestilent notions he has learned of them; and your friend had better go there, too."

"But I may attend the lord mayor's court this morning?" said Launcelot.

"Yes, you must, I suppose; only I would rather that a Navy Office clerk had nothing to do with Quakers."

Launcelot speedily had more ample proof of the unpopularity of Quakers. As soon as it was whispered among the crowd of loungers round the court that he was a friend of one of the prisoners, he was hustled and hooted, and all sorts of disparaging remarks were leveled at him; and he was treated with little more courtesy by the officials themselves, when he appealed to them for protection. It was a painful scene altogether, to see harmless, inoffensive men, like these Quakers, browbeaten and treated with the utmost scorn; and, although Sir Harry Oaklands spoke in defense of himself and his companions, contending that they had broken no law, the fact that they refused to take the customary oath—alleging that to do so would be to break the law

of God—was enough to condemn them; and it was with difficulty that Launcelot obtained the release of his friend until they had again to appear before the magistrate.

It was the usual plan to vex and annoy these people by repeated demands; for the law against them was yet scarcely defined enough to warrant a conviction, if they were sent to trial; and so it rested very much with the popular voice or the caprice of the magistrates whether they were severely punished or speedily released.

Sir Harry would scarcely accept his own release on bail, when he found that his companions were to be sent to prison again; but Launcelot overcame his scruples at last, and he consented to go with him to the Blue Boar, and hear all that had befallen his friends since they parted.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PLAGUE.

THE intimacy once recommenced between Sir Harry Oaklands and the Aylmer family soon ripened into a warmer friendship than ever; and he was a constant visitor at their house, whenever he was staying in London. Launcelot, too, without actually adopting a Quaker garb or Quaker peculiarities, soon became so imbued with the spirit that actuated these people, from attending their meetings frequently, that the unhappy, restless dissatisfaction with his present life was almost forgotten; and he, like his sister, was learning that he was only a stranger and pilgrim journeying to a better country, even a heavenly.

Mrs. Aylmer scarcely knew what to think when she saw her son settling down so contentedly, and even happily, as a mere subordinate clerk, his only recreation the fresco-painting of the walls of their sitting-room, or an occasional walk with Audrey in the coun-

try, diversified by attending various Quaker meetings with Sir Harry Oaklands.

It was not the sort of life to recommend him to the notice of those powerful at court, and Mrs. Aylmer knew it; and yet she could not but feel thankful that her son had chosen the better part, although it exposed him to all the jests and witticisms of his fashionable companions at the office. Mr. Pepys, however, always stood his firm friend; and although he was more than once accused of being a Quaker, that gentleman contrived to protect him, and did all in his power to recommend him to the notice of those who might be able to advance his interests.

Thus the years 1663–64 slipped quietly away. In the winter of 1864–65 several cases of plague occurred in the parish of St. Giles. But those were not the days of newspapers, when every thing occurring at one end of the town was known at the other in less than an hour. News traveled slowly then; and if Launcelot heard the whisper that frightened a few people, he did not mention it at home; and so the peaceful inhabitants of the Blue Boar heard nothing of the dread visitant that was among them, until the spring of the year 1665. Then all at once the whole city was

panic-stricken with the news that the plague was among them—had been carrying off its victims slowly but unceasingly all the winter. One neighbor ran to tell another, and friend to warn friends to escape while they had time. Nothing was talked of but the plague, and how it could be averted or escaped from. Those who had friends in the country, and could go away without much loss or inconvenience, packed up at once and went. Others sent wives and children out of danger, but stayed themselves to share the risk of what might befall their fellow-citizens. Among the gentry, at the west end of the town, there was a pretty general exodus; and all day, long strings of carts and wagons, bearing furniture and luggage, might be seen pushing their way all along the roads leading out of town.

Mrs. Aylmer's first exclamation, when she heard the news, was, "O that we could go to Aylmer Court!" But that being out of the question, and every other country retreat equally impossible, it was useless for them to discuss the question whether they should go or stay, for stay they must. Their landlord down stairs, however, was almost beside himself with fright; and having put a few things together, he gave Launcelot the key of his

shop, and started at once; for he had only himself to think of and care for.

"It is needful now to get a certificate of health from the lord mayor before one dare travel," he said; "but except for the crowd about the doors, it is easy enough to get this now. How it may be in a month's time, we do not know."

"That is quite true," said Launcelot, with something of a sigh, thinking of the dear ones up stairs, and how impossible it was to remove them to a place of safety.

When he went back he spoke of this to Bessie. "I wonder whether I could manage to take you to Greenwich?" he said, debatingly.

"Don't think of it, Launce," she said. "You could not leave the Navy Office, and we could not leave you, even if we had the money it would cost."

"I could not leave Mr. Pepys just snow, certainly, with this Dutch war close upon us, when all the fighting will be done by the ships —no, no, I should not be an Aylmer to shirk my work in a time of such danger; but I do think you and mother and Audrey might remove to some safe place—Deptford or Greenwich—where I should be able to see you sometimes."

"What! and you live here by yourself!—is that what you mean?" asked Bessie.

"Yes; why not? I could manage very well," said her brother.

But Bessie shook her head, and her eyes slowly filled with tears. "Don't say a word about it to mother," she said; "you are only thinking of me."

"You and mother and Audrey."

"Mother would never leave you here alone; but she would try to send me and Audrey away somewhere. No, no; God has sent a sweet message to me this morning, and, of course, it is for all of us: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." I am not a bit afraid, Launce; and I do think, if it had not been for the comet we saw lately, and all the talk there is about wonders and portents, the people would not be in such a hurry to run away as they are."

"I cannot help being afraid for you," said her brother.

"Mary told me, last week, her father had been to see several people who were ill with it."

"Then I hope Mary will not come here," said Launcelot, sharply.

"I asked if there was not a good deal of

danger. But she laughed, and said they were plague-proof and fever-proof; that he often went to see people who were ill of fever, but had never caught any infection himself, or taken it home to his family."

"But we have not had the plague among us for some years. I do not think he ought to go into a house where that is," said Launcelot.

"He wears a special suit of clothes, that he always keeps sprinkled with vinegar, Mary says. The doctor told him to do this long ago."

"But he is not obliged to go visiting the sick now, if he was before," said Launcelot. "There is another minister, now all the nonconformists have been turned out of their livings."

"This new minister has gone away in a fright, like our landlord down stairs," said Bessie. "But I do not think any have been sick of the plague in our parish yet," she added, "or perhaps he would have stayed."

"Perhaps he would,' said Launcelot, with a touch of his old sarcasm. "But, from all I can hear, many of these newly-appointed ministers are flying away in fright, leaving their people and pulpits to any body or nobody."

"Mr. Maitland, then, will stay to help the poor, I'm quite sure. They have been getting on better lately, Launce, since you have been able to get him a little scrivener's work. Are you likely to be busy still at the Navy Office?" she asked.

"Busy! with a naval war on hand? O yes, we are likely to be too busy for some people's comfort. There will be plenty of scrivener's work for Mr. Maitland if he can do it, I know."

"I am so glad—not about the war—I don't like to think of that—but that Mr. Maitland has some work he can do."

"Have you seen Rosalind lately?" asked Launcelot. It was not often that he mentioned his cousin's name, and rarely saw her, even when she came to visit them, as she did sometimes.

"Mary said she was coming to see us one day this week. We have not seen her for some time," added Bessie.

"Do you think she has altered at all?" asked her brother.

"You mean she is less selfish? Well, I don't think any one could live with the Maitlands and not have some of it taken out of them. I know she helps Mary with the

lace-making, and Mary always thinks it was most kind of her to refuse to go away when her father was turned out of his living, and they had to face such dreadful poverty. I like to think it was kindness, too; but somehow we never could feel quite sure what Rosalind would do under any circumstances, and Audrey always declares she was born to make mischief and trouble for every body she came near.

"I don't think Audrey ever was fond of her, and I know she looks upon her now as the cause of all our misfortunes," said Launcelot.

"Yes, she does," admitted Bessie; "but I tell her that is not quite fair."

"Well, you will be kind to her, I know, Bessie, and make allowance for her faults, as mother does. O dear, I wish she were a different girl!" he added, with deep feeling.

Bessie pressed her brother's hand, and looked tenderly into his face. She knew his secret, but had never dared to speak of it, and even from her look he turned hastily away and went out.

The next day, as mother and daughters were sitting at work in the window, there came a heavy knocking at the door down stairs, and on its being opened, Rosalind rushed in.

"O, aunt, what is to become of us all?" she said, sitting down and wringing her hands.

Bessie turned pale with alarm, for she felt sure Mr. Maitland had caught the plague, or some dreadful accident had happened to Mary; and Audrey at once became excited, and exclaimed: "O, Rosalind, what is the matter? is there another dreadful comet?"

Rosalind shook her head. "Worse than that," she said; "one of the clever German doctors who sold plague water has himself died of the plague."

"Killed by his own water?' asked Mrs. Aylmer, quietly, while Audrey felt so relieved that she actually laughed, to her cousin's great indignation.

"How can you laugh?" exclaimed Rosalind, angrily. "Aunt, we are in dreadful danger of catching the plague; and if the medicine they warrant will cure it is of no use, what are we to do?"

"Trust in the Lord," said Bessie, quietly.

"Yes, that is all very well; but we ought to take care of ourselves. I had bought half a pint of this man's plague water, for Mr. Maitland will go to see every sick person who sends for him, so that we never know how

soon he may bring it home, and I cannot afford to buy all the medicine that is sold for it."

"What a pity!" said Audrey, mockingly.

"Well, it would not be needful to buy all, perhaps, because there are so many things warranted to cure it; but how am I to know which is the best? The money I spent for what I've got is wasted now," added Rosalind, in an injured tone.

"Then the real grievance is that you have been cheated out of your money?" said her aunt, with something like a smile, while Audrey laughed openly.

"Would you like to be cheated, then?" demanded Rosalind, angrily.

"No, I should not; but I hope I should not be such a goose as to spend my money in plague waters," retorted Audrey.

"Hush, hush!" interposed Mrs. Aylmer; "is this all that has frightened you, Rosalind?" she asked.

Rosalind shook her head, and began to cry. "I cannot bear it any longer, aunt," she sobbed; "it was bad enough before the plague came, but I must get away now."

"Get away!" repeated Mrs. Aylmer, in vague alarm, wondering what hare-brained

scheme Rosalind had formed in her active mind.

"Yes, aunt; I must, I must!" she sobbed, passionately. "I cannot bear it any longer. I never thought Mr. Maitland would be poor so long as this, or I should not have offered to stay with them."

"But where can you go?" asked Mrs. Aylmer, in consternation.

"You cannot come here," put in Bessie, quickly, thinking instantly of her brother.

"I don't want to come here," replied Rosalind, hotly.

"But, my dear child, where else can you go?" said her aunt, in a troubled tone. "We must try and make room for you, if you are no longer happy at Mr. Maitland's."

"O, it isn't that exactly," said Rosalind, beginning to dry her tears. "I should be happy, I dare say, if I could see when there would be an end to this pinching and screwing and contriving; but I can't. I can assure you, aunt, I had the greatest trouble to save enough money to buy that one half-pint of plague water; and think of being without any proper medicine for the plague, when some of us may be seized with it at any moment."

"But you say the man who made this has

died, although I suppose he had plenty?" said Audrey.

"Yes; that is where it is so dreadful, for we have no money to buy more," said Rosalind. "And so I must go away somewhere—every body is going away now," she added.

"Well, we shall have to stay here, I expect, plague or no plague," said Audrey.

"Yes, I suppose so; you could not ask friends to take such a lot of you; but they might take one like me."

Audrey and her mother both looked up as Rosalind said this. "Then you know some friend who is willing to take you away from London?" said her aunt.

"Yes—no—that is, I came to talk to you about it, aunt. Isn't there an uncle or cousin or some relative—a minister in Derbyshire, that I could go to?"

"I never knew your father's friends," said Mrs. Aylmer, rather stiffly.

"And you think this uncle or cousin must be my father's relative?" said Rosalind, languidly.

"Certainly; he was not your mother's. But what has brought him to your remembrance just now?" asked her aunt.

"Well, I've been thinking I must go some-

where; and if this good man—I have heard my father say often he was a very good man—if he knew he had a poor orphan niece here in London, I dare say he would be very glad to let me go to him."

"But you have never been to any of your father's relatives!" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer. In point of fact the Aylmers had always looked down upon them as people quite beneath their notice, so that it was not strange that the lady had never heard of this uncle before.

"No; but I could do so now. This uncle was a rector, or curate, somewhere in Derbyshire; but I forget the name of the place."

"Then how can you think of going to him, if you forget the name of the place where he lives?" exclaimed her aunt.

"I might find it out."

"Do you know what his name is?"

Rosalind shook her head. "I cannot think of it just now; but I have heard my father say it a good many times, so that I am sure I shall be able to recall it when I try. Do you not think I had better go to him, aunt?" she asked.

'Go to an uncle whose name you do not know, nor even where he lives? Now be sen-

sible, Rosalind; you are frightening yourself over this talk about the plague. Try to think that God can take care of you here in London as well as in the country. By and by this panic will be over, and people will settle down to their work again, and then you will wish you had not run away in such a fright."

CHAPTER XVII.

PERPLEXITIES.

"MOTHER, Rosalind has made up her mind to go away, and she'll go—somewhere," said Audrey, as soon as her cousin was safely out of hearing.

Mrs. Aylmer sighed. "I don't know what to do about the child," she said.

"She is not a child now, mother," said Bessie. "She is older than Audrey—quite old enough to take care of herself."

"No, no, Bessie; she is just one of those who always will need to be taken care of," said Mrs. Aylmer. "We must talk to Launce about it when he comes home."

But Bessie objected to this, being anxious to save her brother from any further pain on Rosalind's account. "Let us wait a few days before teasing Launcelot," she said; "perhaps the sickness may abate, and then we shall hear no more about Rosalind going away."

But the plague did not abate; on the con-

trary, as the weeks went on the bills of mortality daily increased; and, to make matters worse, nearly all the mechanics and laborers usually employed in the city were thrown out of work; for merchants shut up their shops and warehouses, and went with their families into the country, or to some vessel lying out in the river below Greenwich. There were numbers of vessels now anchored in the middle of the stream, crowded with the frightened citizens, who thus tried to escape the ravages of the terrible sickness; and those who could not leave their homes shut up their shops and betook themselves to the upper rooms of the house for safety.

All visiting among friends and neighbors was at an end now, and the Aylmers followed the example of others, and shut themselves up in their own rooms, only opening the door for Launcelot to leave or come in; and he, to avoid all contact with other people, ran to Paul's Wharf, where a certain waterman was waiting with his boat to take him to the Tower Stairs, the nearest point by water to the Navy Office. This same waterman brought a basket of provisions twice a week, which was drawn up by a rope to the window, the man so timing his visit that the boat could draw

close up underneath. These provisions were never bought in London, but at Greenwich or Deptford, the man being employed among the ships in the river on the same business. He had given up landing in London, and slept in his boat, after securing it to one of the larger vessels in the middle of the stream at night.

Audrey often sighed and grumbled over the dreariness of their days now, and longed even for a visit from Rosalind, to break the weary monotony; for there were no gay boats and barges passing up and down the river this summer, and she sorely tried Bessie's patience sometimes; for when the rooms had been washed over — as they were every morning now, and then sprinkled with vinegar—and the beds made, there remained little more for Audrey to do; and so she could only sit beside Bessie's couch, and wonder how things looked in the streets now—whether it was true that grass was growing between the stones near the Exchange, as Launcelot had been told; and whether the half-crazy Solomon Eagle was still going about the city with his doleful cro of "Woe, woe to the wicked city! plagues shall come upon it, and desolation, and it shall be utterly burnt with fire!"

She had seen this man once, and listened to his denunciations, and in the dearth of other news was never weary of telling Bessie how he looked, and how bitterly he had denounced the growing wickedness of the times. Sometimes they were wakened in the dead of the night by the ringing of a bell, and lay shuddering at the cry of the men, "Bring out your dead, bring out your dead;" and they knew by the stopping of the terrible pest-cart that some neighbor had been carried off by the plague.

Once or twice the doctor called, and was surprised to see his patient so calm and undisturbed in the midst of such scenes of horror; but although Bessie heard and knew all that went on around her, she was mercifully spared the sight of much that even Audrey and her mother had to witness at first; for her window, looking upon the river instead of the street, prevented her from seeing many a terrible sight, although it was sad enough to see this usually busy waterway silent and well-nigh deserted, not only by the boats and barges plying for mere pleasure, but those for business and the carrying of merchandise had ceased to throng it now.

Beautiful visions of a home where there is

no plague and no sorrow came to cheer her, as she lay watching the quiet river; but the tears would steal into her eyes, and she would silently but fervently pray that this terrible pestilence might speedily abate, and her beloved brother be preserved from its grasp.

It was an intense relief each day when Launcelot came home safely, complaining of no illness; but his mother was careful to see that, before he entered any of the rooms, every article of clothing he wore was taken off, and those that could not be washed well sprinkled with vinegar. Then, when the door was opened, some herbs were burnt in a chafing-dish placed in the middle of the room, for only by the most elaborate precautions could they hope to escape infection. The doctor said the removal of the arras from the walls would do much to prevent it, and if every body in London would follow their example it would help to stay the plague; but, unfortunately, people had more faith in plague waters and other such quackery than in cleanliness and simple sanitary precautions.

The Blue Boar had been shut up about a month, when one day they were disturbed by a loud knocking at the shop door. They took no notice of this at first, but, as it was con-

tinued for some time, Mrs. Aylmer at length went up to a front window, and then saw that Mary and Rosalind were standing outside.

Carefully wrapping her head in a cloth well sprinkled with vinegar, she cautiously opened the window, and called out, "What do you want, Mary?"

"I must come in, aunt," said Rosalind, in her usual commanding tone. "I am going away very soon, and I *must* see you before I go."

But Mrs. Aylmer looked dubious. "We have shut up the house for more than a month now, and only open the door for Launce," she said.

"Then you can open it for me, aunt, just this once," said Rosalind, quickly; "we are well sprinkled with vinegar, and have been eating rue since we have been in the street," she added.

"I can go back, if you wish it," said Mary; but Mrs. Aylmer's anxiety to hear something of these friends overcame her fear of the plague, and she bade the two girls wait until she could open the door.

A barrel half full of tar stood in the shop among the litter of ropes, and, when she

opened the door, Mrs. Aylmer bade the girls stand beside this, for their own sakes as well as hers; for it was believed that tar was a powerful disinfectant, and Launcelot always changed his clothes beside this tar barrel.

"You are running a great risk, Mary, coming into the street like this," said Mrs. Aylmer, reprovingly.

"But my father goes every day," said Mary, "and so it is impossible for us to keep the house shut up. He preaches in the church again every Sunday, and twice a week; for the new minister has gone away, and the poor people naturally look to us to help them."

"But how can he do it, Mary?" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer.

"Aunt, it is quite dreadful!" exclaimed Rosalind, in an excited tone; "we are never safe a minute. I never feel sure but that I may see the plague spot on my arm or neck; and yet Mr. Maitland will go out as if nothing was the matter."

"He believes it is his duty to go," said Mary; "but, indeed, he takes every precaution, Mrs. Aylmer," she added.

"Yes; he often preaches on the church

steps instead of inside the church," said Rosalind. "But the church-yard is half full of people; and who can tell that some of them have not got the plague? Aunt, I cannot bear it any longer. I *must* go away!" she added, bursting into tears.

"It is what we have come to see you about, Mrs. Aylmer," said Mary, calmly. "Rosalind is frightening herself now; and my father thinks, if this uncle will receive her, that it will be better for her to go, especially as he knows some one who is going to Eyam with some merchandise, and could take her safely."

"To Eyam! Where is Eyam?" asked the lady.

"In Derbyshire. It is the place where my uncle lives," said Rosalind, quickly.

Mrs. Aylmer sighed. "I really wish you would try to rest content here in London," she said.

"But how can I, aunt?" she said. "Our lace-making is stopped, for we cannot sell it; there is no one to buy it."

Mrs. Aylmer looked anxiously at Mary, wondering how they lived. She understood the look, and answered: "We have not wanted for bread yet."

"No; but we have nothing to spare for medicine," said Rosalind, in a tone of complaint.

"We have all we need," said Mary; "a good store of vinegar and rue, and figs to roast, should they be needful;" and she looked as though she would like to say more, but did not dare.

"When did you hear from this uncle, Rosalind?" asked Mrs. Aylmer.

"I have not heard from him, aunt; but the little box you gave me had some letters in it —some letters from my father, and one of them was written from this place—Eyam; he was staying with this uncle, who was vicar of the parish, and—"

"But that was years ago, Rosalind; so many things have happened since that letter was written. Your uncle may have died as well as your father."

"Ah! but I have not told you all, aunt," said Rosalind, with a slight laugh. "When you hear the rest, I think you will say I am right in deciding to go away—that it is just a providence sent on purpose for my deliverance."

Rosalind believed in a providence that suited her own selfish ends, and her aunt was well

aware of this; so she said, with some tartness: "You can believe God means you to go away into the country, because you have made up your mind to go. But take off your hoods and cloaks, and come up stairs; it will do Bessie good, I know, to see Mary. You shall wash your hands and faces with vinegar before you come in, and I will light the herbs in the chafing-dish."

"Thank you; I shall like to see Bessie," said Mary, quickly divesting herself of the large cloak, and plentifully sprinkling herself with vinegar from a bottle she carried in her pocket. She was proceeding to do the same for her companion; but Rosalind drew herself away. "I do so hate the smell of vinegar," she said.

"But you must use it, or I cannot let you come up stairs. There is great risk even with this, but—"

"And yet you laugh at plague water, aunt?" interrupted Rosalind.

"We wont talk about plague water now; let Mary sprinkle you with vinegar, or you must stay down here."

"We were sprinkled with it just before we came out," grumbled Rosalind, as she ungraciously submitted.

Audrey fairly shouted for joy when the sitting-room door was opened and their visitors admitted. "I am so glad you let them come up," she said, dancing round her mother in her glee. "Bessie and I have been wondering what could have happened; for we heard you go down and open the street door, but Bessie would not let me open this."

"Of course not. I should not have let Rosalind in now, but she is going away."

The two sisters looked at each other and nodded.

"We have come to ask your mother's consent to her going away," said Mary, turning to Bessie. "My father can make all the arrangements needful for her to travel, if Mrs. Aylmer will send her to Mr. Stanley."

"But I know nothing about this Mr. Stanley," said the lady.

"My father knows him to be a God-fearing minister; and a man in this parish who has relatives there knows him well, and he is willing to take charge of Rosalind and bear her safely to him; for he is to take some merchandise to Eyam on his way to Yorkshire," said Mary.

Rosalind looked triumphant. "Don't you think I ought to go now, aunt?" she said.

But Mrs. Aylmer still looked doubtful. "If I knew more about this Mr. Stanley, I should be better able to decide," she said.

"My father knows him by the report of Mr. Calamy, and so you may rest assured that he is a true, God-fearing man," said Mary; and then she left Rosalind and Mrs. Aylmer to discuss this question by themselves, while she turned to have a little quiet talk with Bessie.

"Have you any thread, Mary?" asked Bessie, in an undertone.

Mary shook her head. "I have several pieces of lace not sold," she said. "There is no one to buy lace now."

"And I am idle for want of thread," said Bessie. "But how do you manage," she suddenly asked, "if you cannot sell the lace now?"

Mary raised her finger and glanced backward toward Rosalind.

"My father said I was not to tell her, because she would talk about it to the children. But, Bessie, the most wonderful thing has happened. We have money to help our poor people again;" and Mary's face fairly beamed with joy as she spoke.

"Did Mrs. Hawkins give it you?" asked

Bessie, who had often heard of the kindness of this old friend.

Mary shook her head.

"My father would not have taken it from her," she said. "You have heard of Solomon Eagle, who wanders about the city, and nobody knows where? He came to our door one day, and when my father opened it and bade him come in, he put a bag of gold pieces into his hand, saying, 'The Lord hath sent it;' but beyond this, we cannot tell how he got it—whether he found it, or whether it was given to him by some dying person, which my father thinks is most likely. He is quite sure it was not stolen, and so he had used it as it was sent for the Lord. We, and many others, must have starved but for Elijah's gold, as we call it. But if Rosalind or the children knew we had such a store, they would want us to go away into the country at once; and so I agreed with my father that it was best to keep it a secret. Having had this sent to him, my father is more certain than ever that God wishes him to stay where he is, and do what he can for his poor desolate flock. You will keep our secret, I know, Bessie?"

"From Rosalind I will; but may I not tell

my mother and Launce? They are growing anxious about you, I know."

"Then you must tell them certainly," said Mary; "but not a word to Rosalind."

"O no; she would read quite the opposite meaning into it," said Bessie; and then the conversation became general, for Rosalind came to look out upon the river.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE PLAGUE WAS TAKEN TO EYAM.

IT was no easy matter for a person to travel out of London at this time; for, in the first place, a bill of health, certifying that the person bearing it was free from all taint of the plague, had to be obtained from the lord mayor before he could be allowed to pass the city gates; and this could be demanded by the constable of every town and village through which he passed.

Mr Maitland had some difficulty in obtaining this bill of health for Rosalind and her escort, and the lord mayor warned him when he gave it that, even with this warrant, the country people might refuse to let them have food or lodging on their journey, so great was the terror of the plague. This was all explained to Rosalind, but she still persisted in her determination to go away; and so, toward the end of July, she went, mounted in a country wagon, and seated on the box of cloth and patterns that went to be delivered to the

Eyam tailor She had contrived to obtain another bottle of plague water, and Mr. Maitland and Mary took care that she was supplied with every thing they could get to make her comfortable on the way. But, after all had been done to provide for the exigencies of the journey, both Mary and Mrs. Aylmer felt unaccountably depressed.

"If we could hear in a month's time that she had reached her journey's end in safety, I should not feel so anxious about her," said the lady.

"I cannot help wishing she had stayed with us," said Mary.

"Mischief is sure to follow wherever she goes," said Audrey, lightly. "Our troubles began soon after she came to us at Aylmer."

"But she did not bring them; remember that, Audrey," said her sister.

"No; but she has brought us enough since. If she had not been so impatient to escape from it herself, we might all have been safe at Aylmer now, instead of being shut up here, with only Mary to come and see us occasionally; and we never know but that she may take the plague going home," said Audrey, who found some satisfaction in grumbling occasionally.

"I sha'n't take the plague," said Mary, with a smile; "and if either of you should catch it, I will come and nurse you, for I have had it."

If a pistol had suddenly exploded close to Audrey's head, she could not have looked more startled as she jumped from her chair and darted across the room.

"You have had the plague?" she slowly uttered.

Mary could not help laughing.

"Don't be very frightened," she said. "We have all had it months go—last winter."

"Did Rosalind know it?" asked Mrs. Aylmer, as soon as she could recover from her astonishment sufficiently to speak.

"Rosalind had it first, and I nursed her, and caught it; and then we were obliged to have a nurse that the doctor sent," said Mary.

"And you have all recovered," uttered the lady, in profound astonishment; for if a person were seized with the dreadful sickness he would be looked upon as dead at once; and to hear that a whole family had recovered from an attack was little short of marvelous.

"That is what my father says, and it fills him with such confidence in going about among the poor; for a person rarely takes it a second

time, the doctor thinks, if he takes ordinary precautions; and that we do always," said Mary.

"But why did you not tell us about this before?" asked Bessie.

"Rosalind begged I would not. I could never understand why she wished to conceal it from you, but she was very anxious that you should not be told; and so we kept it a secret as far as we could."

"Were you very ill?" asked Mrs. Aylmer.

"Yes; the fever was very bad while it lasted; but it did not last long, or we must have died."

"What did you take to cure you?" asked Audrey, quickly.

"O! do try and remember what you gave Rosalind, for we might want to use it for Launcelot," said Bessie, eagerly.

"Well, we gave her first a warm posset of Canary and spirits of sulphur; then we put a poultice of mallows and lily roots on the plague spot; but some use roasted figs and linseed."

"Was that all?" asked Audrey. "Didn't you have any plague water? Rosalind was always talking about plague water."

Mary shook her head.

"We had a drink made by stewing wormwood and wood-sorrel, master-wort and angelica, all together, and there was something else in Venice treacle; but I have kept a supply of both medicines, and we have given a great deal away; and my father thinks, if people were more calm, and not so sure that a person seized with the plague would die of it, there would be fewer deaths than there are."

"There is little doubt of that," said Mrs. Aylmer; "but I should like to have some of your medicine, Mary, if you can spare it, for I often feel anxious about Launcelot."

"They have not closed the Navy Office yet?" said Mary, questioningly.

"How can they, when we are at war with the Dutch?" said Audrey.

"But Launcelot told me yesterday there was some talk of moving the office to Greenwich while the plague lasts," said Bessie, quietly.

"Did he really say so? Mother, shall we go to Greenwich, too?" exclaimed Audrey, excitedly.

"Now, sweetheart, be calm. Launce may not go to Greenwich; and if he does, we may not be able to do so."

But Audrey had heard sufficient to set her excited fancy at work; and when her brother came in she pounced upon him at once with the question: "When are you going to Greenwich, Launcelot? when can we go?"

"I am not going at all," said Launcelot, quietly, and trying to conceal the pain in his voice.

"Not going?" uttered Audrey.

He looked at Bessie and his mother.

"I wish it could be otherwise," he said; "but somebody must go backward and forward to this office, and—and I—"

"You have been chosen, my son, for this difficult task?" said Mrs. Aylmer, with a touch of pride in her tone.

"I—I volunteered for this service," he said.

Bessie and his mother both looked puzzled, and Mary almost pained; for she had often wished that poor helpless Bessie could be removed to a place of safety; and this change in the Navy Office arrangements would make such a thing possible, she thought; and now to hear that Launcelot had volunteered for a service that must keep them all in London was very disappointing to Mary as well as Audrey.

Launcelot saw the look of surprise in her

face, and when she rose to leave, he said, "I will go down to the door with Mary;" for somehow he did not like the thought of her misunderstanding him.

When they reached the shop, he said: "I do not wish you to tell my mother or Bessie, but we cannot go to Greenwich, because I cannot get lodgings for them anywhere. I went about the town yesterday and to-day, but the people ran away from me, when they heard I came from London, and threatened to drown me when I asked some of them to receive a family into one of their houses. The dread of the plague is so great that the offer of a fortune would scarcely tempt them to let us have rooms; and so we *must* stay here now. Mr. Pepys wants somebody left at this office, for important news may come here from the fleet requiring instant dispatch, and so I have volunteered for that work."

"Instead of going to Greenwich?" said Mary.

"Yes; I could have gone there. Mr. Pepys was rather surprised, I think, that I did not; but if I escape the plague I may be of more service here; and my mother must not know *why* I refused to go to Greenwich; but I did not wish you to misunderstand me."

"Thank you for telling me; but I am not sure that you are right in staying," said Mary, dubiously.

"Not right? If there is danger for them I must share it," said Launcelot. "If I went to stay at Greenwich, I should be constantly anxious about them; but here I feel no fear. The Lord has not only spared our lives, but delivered us from the fear of the plague. If it should come to me, Mary, while I am away from home, I shall not come here to bring it to the others—I shall go to the pest-house in Finsbury Fields."

"And kill your mother and Bessie with suspense! No, no! you must come to us if you feel ill; we have all had it, and can nurse you, and at least give you a chance of recovery."

"You have had the plague?" exclaimed Launcelot, with as much astonishment as Audrey.

"Yes; Rosalind brought it home last winter."

"And she has had it, too?"

"Yes; and so I hope there is the less danger of her taking it to Eyam," said Mary.

"It is an ill-advised journey," remarked Launcelot. "She knows nothing of this uncle she has gone to abide with; but still there is

much excuse for her fear, for the plague increases every day, and near three thousand died of it last week."

"It is not quite so bad in this parish; my father thinks it is passing eastward."

"I am afraid it is. Did Rosalind promise to send you a letter when she reached Eyam?" he asked.

"Yes; but my father thinks it may be a month at least before we can hear from her. She was well supplied with all necessaries for the journey; so that if the country people should refuse to sell them any thing they will not starve, if they are careful to husband their stores. Now, you will remember to come to us should you be taken ill?" said Mary, as Launcelot was about to open the door.

He was unwilling to promise this; but she assured him that they were well provided with every thing necessary, thanks to Solomon Eagle's gift, and there would be little danger of any of the family taking it, as they had all had it. "But think what it would be if you brought the infection home, and Bessie should be left alone in the world!" said Mary.

"Hush, hush! it is of dear Bessie I am thinking, I am constantly hearing some tale of horror, and then I think what it would be

if we were stricken one after the other, and she were left unable to help us or herself either. Yes, I will promise what you wish; but I hope and pray I may never have to trespass on your kindness;" and then Launcelot opened the door and Mary went out.

Whether Launcelot would have kept his promise, or whether, in the first feeling of languid stupor, he would have gone home, not knowing what ailed him, it is hard to say; but Mr. Maitland met him, a week later, near Paul's Wharf, looking so haggard and ill that he at once took him by the arm and led him to his own house.

"I will take him to the little chamber at the top of the house," said Mr. Maitland, when Mary opened the door. "Tell Deb to make a hot posset," for their oid maid-servant had been turned adrift on the wide world of London, as so many other servants were at this time, and had gladly found a refuge in serving her former master.

"Is it the plague?" whispered Mary.

"I fear so. Bring the posset when it is ready, and place it near the top of the stairs. I will tell you then;" and as soon as Launcelot was laid on the bed Mr. Maitland proceeded to examine his arm and chest for the

fatal plague spot. The pustule was just appearing on his arm, but the illness, evidently, had not been on him long, and so the minister hoped the attack might prove light. But, as soon as every thing had been done for the patient, it was necessary to give notice to the authorities, and then they had to consider what was to be done about letting Mrs. Aylmer know where Launcelot was. She must not be left in suspense, lest in her anxiety she should incur greater risk by going in search of her son; and so Deb, who had not been near the patient, was dispatched with the sad tidings, before the watchman arrived to close the house and mark the door with the sign of the cross, and the piteous formula, "Lord, have mercy upon us."

It was a terrible blow to Mrs. Aylmer to hear that her son had been stricken with the dreadful sickness, and she would have gone at once, that she might nurse him herself; but Deb told her that the watchman would be there before she could get back; and she knew that if she went she would not be allowed to leave the house again for some time; and what might not happen to Audrey and Bessie while she was away? Besides, as Deb sensibly reminded her, it might be worse; for he

would be better cared for at Mr. Maitland's than in the pest-house, where he might have been taken if the minister had not met him; but still she could not help wishing he had come home, and wondering why he had been taken to Mr. Maitland's. Of course, she knew nothing of what had passed between him and Mary, and of his determination to go to the pest-house rather than bring the sickness home to endanger all their lives; and so she was left wishing still that Launcelot had come to them when Deb went back to do her share of nursing, for she, too, was one of the few who had had the plague and recovered.

The little household at the Blue Boar were full of grief and consternation over this long-expected yet dreaded blow; but Bessie, as usual, was the first to recover sufficiently from its stunning effects to be able to say a word of comfort and counsel to her mother and Audrey. "Come and kneel beside me here, and let us pray together," she said. "David chose to be afflicted with pestilence, rather than any thing else, because that came direct from God; and so we may comfort ourselves in the same way, that we are in his hands; and if he afflicts us for our sins, it is in love and tender mercy, because he would root the evil thing

out of us." And then the three poured out their hearts at the throne of grace, beseeching God, in his mercy, to spare their beloved, and to stay this terrible plague that was desolating nearly every house in London.

The next day Mrs. Aylmer decided to go out and try to learn how Launcelot was. She dare not go to the house to inquire, but the watchman at the door could tell her whether the dead-cart had been called during the night, and whether he had heard any thing of those inside.

She took care to sprinkle all her clothes with vinegar before going out, and then walked in the middle of the road, to avoid meeting any of the few people who might be out. But the streets were well-nigh deserted now, for almost every other house bore the fatal cross on its door and many of them were quite deserted, the whole family having died. At last she reached Mr. Maitland's, and called to the watchman to know if he knew any thing of what was going on inside.

"I was to tell all as came that the sick man was doing well, and nobody else had been took bad," said the watchman. "Somebody called that through the key-hole an hour ago."

CHAPTER XIX.

A STRANGE MEETING.

WITH trembling joy Mrs. Aylmer returned home with the news that Launcelot was alive and doing well, and then a little thanksgiving service was held beside Bessie's couch; for even in such a strait as this Mrs. Aylmer could not do without the help of her prayer book. But the prayer and praise were none the less real because they were expressed in language written by another: her soul mounted up as with the wings of an eagle, and she felt calmed and rested, and willing to abide by the will of the Lord, as she rose from her knees and closed the prayer book.

"You are not afraid, are you, Bessie?" she said, seeing the girl's eyes were still closed.

"Afraid?" whispered Bessie. "I don't know, mother. Was Moses afraid when he put his shoes off, because God was in the bush, and he knew it, felt it, could almost see him? That is how I feel now. O, mother, what

does it matter, life or death, since nothing can separate us from him?" and the girl looked up so blissfully, radiantly happy, that her mother felt almost alarmed, and Audrey gave voice to her fears by exclaiming:

"O, Bessie, are you going to be ill, too?"

"Are people ever ill from too much happiness?" asked Bessie, quietly.

"But you say you don't care whether you live or die," expostulated Audrey.

"I said it did not matter, since God would still be with us. I wish you could understand what I mean, sweetheart," added Bessie.

"Mother, do make her a hot posset," was Audrey's reply; "we have got some of the Canary Mary brought us."

But Bessie shook her head. "Happiness is better than hot possets and plague water," she said; "so you may keep your Canary for yourself, in case you should want it. No, mother; I really am not ill," she said, in answer to her mother's look of anxiety, "but so full of peace and joy that if I knew the dead-cart was coming for me to-night I do not think I should feel troubled or afraid."

Bessie did but give expression now to what had become her habitual frame of mind; but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speaketh, and this morning the well-spring of joy had brimmed over, and she felt compelled to speak. But her words, instead of re-assuring Audrey, only alarmed her the more.

"I'm sure she is going to be ill," she whispered to her mother. "Don't you think you had better get some of the medicine ready?" and she actually shivered, although the weather was warm.

"Now who wants the Canary?" said Bessie, laughing. "I tell you, Audrey, fear kills as many as the plague;" and really for the next hour or two it seemed as though the poor girl had been seized with the fatal sickness, and Mrs. Aylmer was greatly alarmed. But whether the timely application of the usual remedies averted a severe attack, or whether it was merely the sudden fright she had taken about Bessie, the shivering and feverishness passed off in a few hours, although her mother kept her in bed for the next day.

The following morning Mrs. Aylmer went out again, as far as Mr. Maitland's house, and heard from the watchman that Launcelot was doing well, and no others in the house had been attacked as yet; and Mrs. Aylmer went back thankful and hopeful.

But, O! the dreary monotony of those hot,

sad summer days, when the grass grew in the city streets, and men and women who ventured abroad flitted like specters along the road, afraid to meet even a friend, lest death should be the penalty of a hand-shake. To the little family shut up in the rooms looking on the silent river, the time passed slowly indeed for the next few weeks; and yet they could not but feel thankful for the mercy that had spared their prop and main-stay; for had Launcelot died of the plague, they would have been friendless indeed.

At length, to Mrs. Aylmer's inexpressible joy, she went one morning as usual to pay her customary visit at Mr. Maitland's, and found the door open, and the watchman gone.

"May I come in?" she said, pausing on the threshold.

"Yes, yes, dear Mrs. Aylmer; we left the door open on purpose," said Mary, from an inner room. "Go to the foot of the stairs, and you will see Launcelot in a minute; but my father says you must not go near him, nor stay in the house more than five minutes."

Mary spoke from the inner room, and did not venture to come forward and greet her friend.

"And you, Mary—all of you?" asked Mrs. Aylmer, in a shaking voice.

"We are all quite well. We have not been up stairs. Deb and my father have nursed him."

At this moment a faint but cheerful voice said, "Mother;" and at the sound Mrs. Aylmer rushed up two or three stairs. But Launcelot drew back instantly.

"No, no; go back, go back!" he almost shrieked; and Mr. Maitland came forward, and begged her to go back to the door.

"It is a great risk for you to come here at all; but we thought it would do him good to see you for a minute. Poor soul, it is hard, I know," said the minister, pityingly, as Mrs. Aylmer staggered against the wall as though she had been shot.

"O, mother, mother!" wailed Launcelot; "go back, go back, for Bessie's sake!"

"I will, I will, my son," said the lady, by a desperate effort recovering her energy. "Thank God, I have seen him once more!" she murmured, as she slowly felt her way to the door; for she was faint with emotion, and felt dizzy and half-blinded.

"God bless you, mother," said Launcelot, as she turned to look up the stairs once more, and pray him to bless his servant here, who has snatched me from the very jaws of death.

"I will, I will," murmured the lady; and she would have fallen to the ground, had not Mary ran forward, despite the risk, and placed her in a chair, and then made her swallow a glass of Canary.

"I would walk home with you, but I am afraid," said Mary. "How are Bessie and Audrey?"

"Quite well. O, Mary, how can I ever thank you for—"

"Hush, hush! You must go now; you must not touch me," said Mary, drawing back; and then, as Mrs. Aylmer rose from her chair, Mary sprinkled her liberally with vinegar thrown over with a little brush kept for the purpose.

"Launcelot will try to go out for a walk this evening," she said; "the watchman told us, before he left, that orders had been given for all citizens to be in, and shut up their houses by eight o'clock, that those who have had the plague may go out and take the air; so, when he has gone Deb will light a brazier of charcoal and sulphur in the room where he has been ill, and shut it up for some time, and he and my father will live in another room after to-day. If he can walk as far, he will come and look up at your house; but pray do not

open the window or try to speak. But if you could put a light in the window, or hold it so that Launcelot could see you and Audrey, it would please him, I am sure; and every little thing helps or hinders, when people are getting over the plague; and he is anxious about you all, I know."

"Thank you, Mary, for thinking of the plan," said Mrs. Aylmer; "we will be in readiness for him." Poor mother! it was a comfort to her to think she might do something to help forward her son's recovery, even in this small way; for, in spite of all the thankfulness she felt toward these kind friends who had nursed him, she could not help grudging them what was her prerogative, and would have been her joy and pleasure. But the thought of Bessie and Audrey, and the dangerous risk to which they would have been exposed if Launcelot had come home, speedily checked the ungrateful thoughts; and with another word of thanks to Mary, Mrs. Aylmer left.

As soon as she reached the street she felt eager to get home, and tell Bessie and Audrey she had seen their brother once more; but she felt weak and tottering when she tried to walk fast, and whether she would have reached her home without falling to the ground is uncer-

tain; but when about half-way there she found herself suddenly supported by a strong arm, and, looking round, she saw Sir Harry Oaklands.

"Are you ill, Mrs. Aylmer?" asked the young man, anxiously. "Try to keep up until you reach your own home," he added, "or they may want to take you to the pest-house."

"I'm only a little weak," she said, in a feeble voice; "I have seen Launce again this morning!"

"Seen him again!" repeated the gentleman. "Has he been ill? I have come in search of him; for I saw Mr. Pepys at Greenwich yesterday, and he told me he had not seen Launcelot nor any of his other clerks for the last few days."

"Poor fellows! perhaps they, too, have had the plague," said Mrs. Aylmer, faintly.

Sir Harry started. "Surely, surely, they have not taken Launcelot to the pest-house?" he said, remembering what the lady had first told him.

"No; it is not so bad as that, although it might have been. Launce has had the plague; but our kind friend, Mr. Maitland, took him home and nursed him there; and he is getting better, and will come out for a walk this evening, Mary tells me."

"Thank God for that good news! He is very good to us all, Mrs. Aylmer. And now tell me about yourself and your daughters."

"We are well. Audrey has had a slight attack of sickness, but not the plague, I think; while Bessie—well, she is so strangely happy among all these terrors, that sometimes I feel more afraid for her than for Audrey, but she seems quite well."

"Ah! 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee,' said the gentleman; "that is the secret of Bessie's health and happiness, I fancy. The promise is given to all of us; but until the holy Light shines upon it, it is a dark saying, and a mystery to most people."

They had reached the door by this time, and, almost before they could knock, Audrey had opened it; for she had been watching at the casement above, and saw them coming up the street.

"May I come in, Mrs. Aylmer?" asked Sir Harry, as the bolts were being withdrawn.

"Yes, indeed, if you are not afraid," said the lady; "but sprinkle yourself with vinegar, and go up stairs with Audrey at once, while I change my things down here;" for Mrs. Aylmer never ventured near her daughters in the

same clothes that she wore in the street, and to-day it was more necessary than ever to take precautions against the infection.

This visit of Sir Harry Oaklands was welcome to every body concerned, more especially to Bessie, perhaps; for he could understand the source of her peaceful happiness, and a few whispered words, or a silent pressure of the hand, are as eloquent as volumes between friends who understand each other's inner spiritual life, as these two did.

But Bessie was not by any means allowed to engross all the gentleman's attention, however willing he might be to give it. Audrey was anxious to know what was going on in the outside world, while Mrs. Aylmer was eager to tell all she knew about Launcelot's illness, and that the Maitland household had all had the plague the previous winter. But it seemed that Sir Harry Oaklands knew all about that; and, having heard also that those who had it once were not likely to be attacked with it again, he had decided to go there, as being the one household in London likely to be open just now, where he might hear something of the family at the Blue Boar; for Mr. Pepys's complaint about having no clerks to do the work of the Navy Office had filled

him with consternation for the fate of Launcelot and his family.

"I will go to Greenwich to-morrow, and tell Mr. Pepys Launcelot has had the plague, but will return to his duties as soon as he has entirely recovered. I suppose he will go back?" he said, questioningly.

"O, yes, certainly; it is our sole dependence now," said Mrs. Aylmer. "I do not know what we should do without his salary."

"We have given up all hope of ever going back to Aylmer, now," said Audrey, with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Almost forgotten there is such a place," said Bessie, laughing.

But Mrs. Aylmer shook her head.

"No, sweetheart; I can never forget the dear home where so many happy hours of my life were spent. But I have learned many things here—learned to be content with my children's love, even in this poor room; and if Launcelot is only spared to come back to us, I will never murmur again because I cannot take you all with me to the old home."

"We have been so very happy here, my mother," said Bessie. "I feel now as though I should be almost afraid to go away."

"Nay, nay; the Lord could make Aylmer

Court as peaceful and happy as the Blue Boar," said Sir Harry, quickly.

"And I'm sure, if Bessie could be so happy just looking out of the window, and at these bare walls, she ought to be at Aylmer; especially when she knows it would make mother so much happier," said Audrey.

"Why, one would think I was keeping you away from Aylmer, and lived here from choice," said Bessie, laughing at her sister's grumbling complaints.

"You have much to thank the bare walls for," said Sir Harry, looking round the plainly-furnished room.

"The doctor said he was glad to see the arras had been taken away," said Mrs. Aylmer, who only now began dimly to see that what she had looked upon as an additional trial and deprivation, was, after all, like so many other things, merely a blessing in disguise.

"There is nothing here to harbor the infection," said the gentleman; "and doubtless that has greatly helped to keep you free from it. There is scarcely a house in the parish where they have not had the plague, I was told, when I landed at Paul's Wharf; so you have much to be thankful for;" and as he

spoke he looked pityingly at Bessie, and thought of what her agony would be if she saw her mother and sister stricken with the fell disease, while she was totally unable to help them.

It was arranged that Sir Harry Oaklands should stay until the evening, and show himself at the window with Audrey and Mrs. Aylmer. This would be an assurance to Launcelot that his mother and sisters were cared for; and also, if Sir Harry could catch a glimpse of him, he would be able to assure Mr. Pepys of his recovery so far, and therefore of his being shortly able to return to his post at the Navy Office.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FIVE-MILE ACT.

IT was a dreary procession of ghost-like invalids that paced along the close, narrow, hot streets of London at night-fall; but many, like Launcelot, were thankful for even that breath of the outer air. He was leaning on Mr. Maitland's arm, and managed to walk as far as his old home; and it was no small comfort to him to see his old friend Sir Harry Oaklands supporting his mother, while Audrey held the lamp so that he could have a good view of the whole group. He paused in front of the house, and waved his hand in recognition of them; and they, too, managed to make out the two figures standing there, although it was not easy, in the deepening gloom of the summer night. But it was enough to satisfy the watchers that he was getting better; and Sir Harry could go and tell Mr. Pepys now that he would soon be back at his post again.

But Launcelot's progress was not so rapid as his mother and friends had anticipated.

The month of August and part of September were very hot; and it seemed impossible for any one to gain strength, or even throw off the remains of the disease, in such a stifling atmosphere. More than once had the day been fixed for Launcelot to return home; but a slight relapse compelled them to postpone it again, until at last the minister obtained the use of a boat, in which he and Launcelot could go up and down the river as they pleased, so long as they avoided coming in contact with other boats.

During these hours spent on the water the two friends had many a pleasant conversation; and Launcelot learned much from the deep sweet charity that characterized every thought of Mr. Maitland. Every prejudice he had formerly entertained against those whom he had looked upon as the enemies of God and their country, gradually melted away, like ice barriers before the breath of summer; and although nothing would ever change the loyalty he felt toward the king, and he would always regard the late king as a martyr, still he could now see things from the stand-point occupied by Mr Maitland and his Puritan friends, and his estimate of these people underwent a great change.

These pleasant hours spent in rowing up and down the river were in every way a benefit to Launcelot; for he gained health and strength daily now, and his appetite improved so rapidly that Deb's culinary skill was no longer taxed to please his somewhat exacting fancy. Of course, he was anxious to return to his duties as speedily as possible, and Mr. Pepys was as anxious for him to go back; for with a naval war in progress, and all the clerks away from the Navy Office, accounts of all kinds were getting sadly in arrears. But it seemed as though Launcelot's very eagerness to return to his duties hindered his gaining strength as he ought to do; and although he went once or twice to Greenwich during October, it was not until November had fairly set in that he was able to take up his regular duties at the Navy Office again. And bad enough things were. A naval victory over the Dutch had been gained at Solebay, and a good many vessels taken from the enemy; and if this could have been followed up promptly, the war would speedily have ended; but although money could be found for the king to waste on his pleasures, the poor sailors were left unpaid, and crowded round the Navy Office, clamoring for the payment of their wages.

It was not a pleasant state of things to go back to, and Launcelot came home each night worn out with fatigue and depressed in spirits.

"Out of twenty-two ships, we can only manage to victual seven," he said, one day, as he came in and threw himself into a chair almost exhausted. "Mr. Pepys is to be surveyor-general of the victualing business, and my salary is to be raised, mother; but, O, the work is hard!" added Launcelot, with a weary sigh.

There was no need to say that the work was hard. Launcelot's whole manner told of the exhausting labor at the office now; and Mrs. Aylmer often feared he would be ill again. But as the cold weather came on things grew more bright all around. The plague decreased; and those of the clerks who had been ill, or afraid to venture out when it was raging so fiercely, once more went back to their duties, which consequently lightened the work for Launcelot. Things were looking brighter about the city, too. Some of the shops were open again, and people ventured into the streets more freely, and met and talked at the Exchange over the prospects for the winter, which was a decided improvement upon the

panic that had prevailed for the last three or four months. But still things were sad enough; and when Audrey returned from her first walk after being shut up so long, instead of coming back cheerful and better for the change, she burst into tears as soon as she came in, and threw herself beside Bessie's couch.

"I wont go out again, Bessie, yet; it is all so dreadful!" she said.

"What is so dreadful?" asked her sister.

"O, every thing! the grass growing in the streets, and the people looking like ghosts, and half afraid of each other," said Audrey, with a convulsive sob.

Bessie stroked her hair, and soothed her as well as she could. "Don't cry, dear!" she whispered; "things will get brigyter every day now. Were all the shops open again?" she asked.

Audrey shook her head.

"Only one here and there; and a lot of the houses are shut up, as though every body was dead. O, dear! I wish we could go away from London, and forget all about this dreadful plague!" sighed Audrey.

But it seemed as though they never were to forget it again. It abated as the cold weather

grew upon them, so that business became almost as brisk as ever in London; but Mary came in one day with the news that a letter had come from Rosalind, at Eyam, in which she said that the plague had broken out there shortly after she reached the village. The carrier who brought the letter was the same man who took Rosalind into Derbyshire, and he had given Mr. Maitland a fuller account than the letter contained. Nothing had been heard of the plague, it seemed, in that out-of-the-way place, until Rosalind took the sad news of what it was doing in London; and a day or two afterward one of the villagers was seized with the terrible pestilence. It might have been carried in the cloth and patterns sent to the tailor's, for it was in his house that the sickness began; but unfortunately it spread to other houses very quickly, and not a week had passed since but one or two had died of the plague.

"And Rosalind—how is she?" asked Mrs. Aylmer, anxiously.

"She says she is quite well," replied Mary. "But I fancy she is rather disappointed, for Mr. Stanley is not the rector now; a Mr. Mompesson has got the living, and Mr. Stanley lives in a small cottage in the village. He

was ejected, like my father ; so Rosalind is not much better off than she was with us."

"Serves her right," muttered Audrey, in a half whisper.

"Did she tell you this in her letter?" asked Mrs. Aylmer, who felt somewhat disappointed that Rosalind had not written to her as well as to Mary. "I wonder she has not written to me," added the lady.

"She has only sent me a very short letter ; so I should think she would send you one by the king's post very soon, telling you all the news. The carrier told my father about Mr. Stanley being ejected, and living in a small cottage, and how he went about helping the people who were sick, and—"

"And vexing Rosalind," laughed Audrey. "I am sorry the poor people have got the plague, but I cannot feel sorry for her ; for she ought not to be so impatient, and in such a hurry to get away from every trouble. If it had not been for her—"

"Hush, sweetheart," said her mother, laying her hand on her shoulder reprovingly. But Audrey muttered something about Aylmer Court under her breath.

"I am afraid Rosalind is not the only impatient maiden I know," remarked Mrs. Ayl-

mer, significantly, as Audrey walked to the window.

"And you have really told us all the news about her?" said Bessie, when she and Mary were left to themselves for a few minutes.

"Not quite all, or I would have brought the letter for you to see. She says that Launcelot ought to have sent you all away into the country when the plague broke out, and she would have stayed and gone with you. She says it is all Launcelot's fault that the plague has broken out at Eyam."

"Mary, burn the letter!" said Bessie, in an excited tone; "never let my mother or Launce see it. She is cruel, cruel! and poor Launce doing what he does for us!"

"I am afraid she is very selfish," said Mary; "and yet she can be so very different. It seemed as though she was most unselfish at the time my father had to give up his living. Bessie dear, have you heard of the fresh trouble that has fallen upon us? We have to leave London."

"Leave London!" repeated Bessie.

Mary nodded, and her eyes filled with tears. "My father and several other non-conformist ministers preached in the churches during the plague, when the new ministers were away in

the country, and this has given great offense to the king and others; and so an act has been passed—'the Five-mile Act' it is called—forbidding any ejected minister to live within five miles of any town or village where they have had a living, or that sends members to Parliament."

"But, Mary, this is a dreadfully harsh law. Surely you must have made some mistake?" said Bessie.

But Mary shook her head. "We all thought there must be some mistake at first; for, beyond preaching in the church, and doing what he could to help the poor, my father has done nothing; and since the new minister has come back to the parish he has left off doing this, much as it grieves him to be idle."

"But what will you do, Mary?" asked Bessie.

"We must go away, of course. We have had notice, and cannot stay much longer."

"O, Mary, we shall not be able to see each other, and we have been such friends!" said Bessie, quickly, as this view of the subject suddenly presented itself to her mind.

The two friends clasped each other by the hand in silent sorrow. For a minute their hearts were full to overflowing, and they could

not speak. At last Bessie managed to say, "Have you told my mother?"

"I want you to tell her and—and Launcelot, after I am gone," she whispered, in a choking voice.

"But you will come again soon? You must come as often as you can spare the time. O, Mary, what shall I do without you?" and Bessie fairly burst into tears; and Audrey came bustling across the room to know what was the matter.

Of course, she had to be told now, and her exclamations of surprise and indignation soon informed Mrs. Aylmer that something unusual had taken place. But before the explanation could be given the door opened, and, to every body's surprise, Launcelot came in; and, while he was explaining the cause of his early arrival, Mary slipped away. No one noticed that she was gone until Launcelot said: "I thought I saw Mary as I came in? Where is she?"

"O, with Bessie, of course!" said Audrey from the shelter of a large closet.

"No; she has gone," said Bessie, striving to look cheerful.

Her brother looked at her curiously. "What is it, Bessie?" he asked, seating himself.

For answer she burst into tears, which greatly alarmed her brother; but Audrey came to the rescue. "The Maitlands are ordered to leave London, because Mr. Maitland preached and helped the poor people when the plague was so bad," she said, indignantly.

"Is this true?" asked Launcelot, and he looked almost as sad as Bessie herself.

His sister nodded. "Mary has just told me about it," she sobbed. "O, Launcelot, why does the king do such cruel and unjust things?" she demanded.

But Launcelot could only shake his head. Even his loyalty was put to a severe strain by this "Five-mile Act." "I did not think it would be enforced, even when it was passed," he said, in a hoarse, choking voice.

Looking up into his face Bessie read something there that made her choke back her own tears and try to comfort her brother. "Five miles is not such a long way, after all," she said, trying to smile. "You might help them to find a place at Greenwich or Deptford, and go to see Mr. Maitland, and bring me messages from Mary sometimes."

"Five miles, or even ten, would not have been far a year or two ago, but now— What

will you do without your friend?" he suddenly asked.

Bessie's eyes filled again. "O, how I shall miss her!" she said. "She comes so often now, and Mr. Maitland's talk helps one to understand things so much better. It will be dreadful for us—for me, if they have to go away."

"And for me, too," said Launcelot, in an undertone; and he pressed his sister's hand, and turned away to take his seat at the table.

During the meal Mrs. Aylmer told him the news Mary had brought to her; but Bessie noticed that the mention of Rosalind did not disturb him now. He was more concerned to hear of the outbreak of the plague at Eyam than of his cousin's private concerns. "I am afraid it will be very bad again in the summer," he said; "it has shown itself at Deptford and Greenwich already, so that the people there have begun to grow quite alarmed."

"O dear, how tiresome!" exclaimed Audrey, petulantly. "I have just been making up my mind that the Maitlands could go there, and that it would be almost as good as their living close by, if Launcelot could take us by boat to see them sometimes; but of course, if

the plague is there—though I am not sure but that it would be a recommendation to Mr. Maitland."

And then the question was discussed from Audrey's point of view—which, of course, wound up with the wish that they could all go and live at Aylmer Court again.

CHAPTER XXI.

A WOEFUL SUNDAY.

THIS summer of 1666 was a sad one for England in general and the Aylmers in particular; for they had made no friends among the neighbors, and when Mr. Maitland and his family were driven from London they were lonely indeed. With the summer heat the plague recommenced its ravages, not only in London, but in many other places; distant villages like Eyam were almost depopulated.

A letter was received from Rosalind, giving a sad account of the progress of events there. The plague was raging so terribly that whole families had been cut off; and the dread of infection in the surrounding places was so great, that if any one attempted to leave the village, even to buy or sell in a neighboring market, they were threatened and driven back. By the intervention of her uncle and Mr. Mompesson, the vicar, a plan had now been devised for obtaining a supply of food, by people from the market leaving what was desired

on a certain stone, and then retiring to some distance, while the messenger from the village fetched what was brought, and placed the money for payment in a pool of water, to be removed afterward.

Rosalind's letter had passed through the same purifying process, and it was still damp when it reached its destination. She complained bitterly, too, of the risk to which her uncle was constantly exposed by his labors among the villagers, hinting that if her aunt could send for her, she would gladly return to London now. But this was out of the question under existing circumstances, and Mrs. Aylmer wrote saying they were more than ever alone, for their friends the Maitlands had gone to a distant village in Kent, and Sir Harry Oaklands dare not come near London now, for fear of being seized by the press-gang, and forced to serve the king in his war against the Dutch, which would, of course, be impossible to him, being a Quaker. So hardly pressed were they for men to serve in his fleet, that the gang appointed by the lord mayor seized Launcelot one day, and, in spite of his protesting that he was serving the king in the Navy Office, he was carried off to Bridewell with the other unfortunate prisoners

taken at the same time, when on their way home from work.

Mrs. Aylmer spent a sleepless night anxiously waiting for the return of Launcelot; but, unfortunately, she was not the only one who had to mourn over the sudden and mysterious disappearance of husbands, brothers, or sons. When she went out early the next morning to make inquiries about Launcelot, she met several groups of women crying and loudly bewailing the cruelty of the authorities, who had seized the bread-winners of their families, and hurried them off to prison, preparatory to sending them to the fleet, leaving wives and children to starve or beg. For these there was no relief and redress; but O, how thankful did Mrs. Aylmer feel when, having told Mr. Pepys her trouble, he said he would go at once to the lord mayor and demand Launcelot's release, if he had been seized; and he arranged that she should go with him to Bridewell and see the prisoners, to ascertain whether Launcelot was among them; for no message had been received from him, and as yet she could only surmise that the press-gang had taken him.

Mr. Pepys was the main-stay and backbone of the Navy Office, so far as the practical

working of it was concerned; but even he had some difficulty in persuading the obstinate lord mayor that Launcelot would be of far more service to the king in fulfilling his proper duties at the office, than being sent to serve in the fleet. He was a man, and helped to swell the numbers sent by the city, and that was enough for its chief magistrate. Little chance, therefore, would the poor women have who went to him with pitiful tales of distress, imploring that their husbands and fathers might be allowed to return home. The lord mayor could turn a deaf ear to such importunities as these, and order the suppliants out of his presence; but Mr. Pepys could not be dismissed so easily. He was a gentleman of some consequence, who had the ear of the king and the Duke of York; but still the magistrate, who had been ordered to send all the men he could impress to re-enforce the fleet, would not yield his prisoner if he could help it; and it was not until Mr. Pepys had changed his arguments to threats that the point was yielded, and he obtained the official order necessary for Launcelot's release from Bridewell, if he had been taken there.

Mrs. Aylmer went with the gentleman to the prison, for her anxiety to obtain tidings

of her son had grown almost unbearable; for this press-gang, alas! was not the only means by which his disappearance could be accounted for. The plague was still carrying off many victims; and although it was not so severe as in the previous summer, it had been clearly demonstrated now, that having once had the sickness did not give the security against a second attack, as was believed at first; and so Launcelot might have been carried to the pest-house in Finsbury Fields; and she would have gone there to make inquiries for him, in spite of the risk to herself, if Mr. Pepys had not persuaded her to go with him to the prison first.

They took boat at Paul's Wharf, and were soon rowed to Bridewell, just beyond Blackfriars, where their fears for Launcelot's safety were speedily set at rest. He was among the prisoners taken the previous evening; and he was thankful indeed for his release; for he and those who had been taken with him—some like himself, only clerks to merchants in the city, and some poor laboring men on their way home from work, while a few were beggars or worse — had been all thrust indiscriminately into a dirty, noisome room, with thieves and robbers for company, and no one had been at

the trouble to inquire whether they wanted food. Launcelot was looking woefully haggard and ill when he was brought out; but the sight of Mr. Pepys and his mother seemed to give him new life, and he declared himself ready to go to the office at once, although he had not tasted food since the previous day.

Mr. Pepys was only too glad to have saved such a trusted clerk, and insisted that he should go home and rest for a few hours at least before coming to the office. "I shall take the first opportunity of recommending you to the notice of the king," said Mr. Pepys. "I have already spoken several times to Sir William Coventry about you."

Launcelot bowed in silent acknowledgment of Mr. Pepys's kindness; but he had learned the vanity of trusting in princes or their favorites. He had grown more than reconciled to his lot, for he knew that through poverty God had led him to embrace the only true riches, and that but for this blessed trial he would never have sought that holy Light —"that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," but which, alas! had been buried in sin and selfishness all his life, until his treasured plans of wealth and worldly greatness had been broken

up and destroyed. Now he shrank from the thought of ever being wealthy, or attaining his rightful position, as from a temptation of Satan; and so Mr. Pepys's promise to recommend him to the king's notice, if ever the opportunity came, made but slight impression upon Launcelot, although Mrs. Aylmer grasped it at once, as offering them a hope of yet being restored to their own again.

She knew, however, that the subject was a distasteful one to her son, and so she waited until he had gone out before mentioning what she had heard to her daughters.

Audrey was of course delighted, and was very ready to build all sorts of air castles on this fragile foundation.

"It could not have happened better, mother!" she exclaimed. "The navy, of course, is in high favor with the king, and he is constantly hearing about it now; and so it will be the easiest thing in the world for Mr. Pepys to tell him of what valuable service Launce has been to him. Wouldn't you be glad, Bessie, if we could go to Aylmer Court? Now do say you would, for Launce is so provoking about it. I believe he thinks now it is downright wicked to be rich," added Audrey, suddenly addressing her sister.

"What am I to say?" laughed Bessie. "We have been very happy together here at the Blue Boar; but, of course, it is not like Aylmer Court; and I am sure, if God gave us our old home, it would be good for us, and he would like us to be glad and thankful."

"There, there, I'm glad you're not like Launce. I believe he is afraid of the dear old place now," said Audrey, skipping round the room.

"Or tired of hearing a chatter-box talk about it," put in her mother.

"I'll tell him when he comes home that Bessie wants to go to Aylmer; for there's no telling what he may do, now he's got these Quaker notions into his head."

"Hush, Audrey!" reproved her mother. "Launcelot is not a Quaker, and pray do not talk at random."

"You need not tell him I *want* to go to Aylmer. I am ready to go when God is ready to send us there, and—"

"Then you do believe that God will give us our own again?" interrupted Audrey.

"I don't know about believing *that*. I *know* God will give us what is best—the very best. He may see that we need to learn something that poverty cannot teach us. We have

learned many bitter-sweet lessons in that school, and he may see that a change of discipline will be better now; I cannot say."

Audrey nodded. "You have had your share of the bitters, Bessie," she said.

"And the sweets, too. Ah, you do not know how happy I have been here sometimes. The river has been as the face of God, full of love and tenderness to me."

But Audrey knew nothing of these hidden joys. To her the river was interesting as a spectacle when it was dotted over with pleasure-boats and barges; but there were few of these to be seen now, and so to her it was dull and uninviting. She had soon made up her mind that they would hear from the king shortly. Mr. Pepys was so often in request that he would be sure to have a chance of recommending Launcelot.

But the weeks of the summer went on, and there were tales of defeat and victory, and that the French had joined the foe, and would have to be watched in the Channel, necessitating the fitting out of a second fleet—all which interested Launcelot, as his work lay in preparing the various details; but to Audrey they were but the mere side events that were to issue at last in their advancement. But, al-

though she was in daily expectation of this great event that was to change the whole tenor of their lives, she had learned to wait with patience, if not with resignation. And so the summer passed, and September came, and no word had been spoken by Mr. Pepys upon which Audrey could found any hope that his promise had not been forgotten.

Saturday, the 1st of September, had been a busy day at the Blue Boar; for Mrs. Aylmer, since the plague began, had frequently washed the floors of all the rooms—a practice rather too uncommon in those days; and, having heard by letter that their landlord was coming back, after a long visit to the country, she and Audrey had been busy that day preparing his rooms as well as their own; and so they all retired to rest early, thoroughly tired out, and they slept later than usual the next morning.

When Mrs. Aylmer was dressing she became conscious of an all-pervading smell of smoke and burning wood; and looking out of the window, she saw that the sky was darkened —not with clouds, as she had at first supposed, but with smoke. She hurried on the rest of her clothes as quickly as she could, and, going into the sitting-room, she saw that Launcelot

was looking anxiously out of the window, and Bessie looked as though she had been awake all night.

"There is a terrible fire, mother; and it has been burning a long time, I am afraid," said Bessie.

"Where is it?" asked Mrs. Aylmer, anxiously, hurrying across the room.

"Somewhere near London Bridge, I think," replied Launcelot, who was looking intently in that direction. "Give me some breakfast, mother, as quickly as you can, and I will go and see where it is."

It did not take long to place the small ale and bread on the table, and Launcelot quickly dispatched his breakfast. Then they gathered round Bessie's couch for the morning devotions, and Launcelot hurried away to ascertain where the fire was.

"What a noise the bells are making!" said Audrey; "not at all as though they were ringing for church."

"They are ringing to alarm the people," said Mrs. Aylmer, as she hurriedly put away the breakfast things. "Are you going to church?" she asked.

"I think so. The fire is not near us, and it will be out soon, I dare say;" and she put on

her things and set out, while Mrs. Aylmer took her prayer book, and sat down to read to Bessie. But her eyes wandered from the book to the window every other minute; and as soon as the morning lesson had been read she laid it aside altogether.

"The fire is increasing, I am afraid, and the wind is carrying the flames and the sparks this way," said Mrs. Aylmer, anxiously, after she had stood at the window a few minutes. Then there was a knocking at the door, and on its being opened, Audrey rushed in, looking excited and frightened. "It is a most dreadful fire," she exclaimed, "and spreading so fast that people are saying that Solomon Eagle's words will come true, and all the town will be burnt!"

"Have you been to church?" asked Bessie.

Audrey shook her head. "There is no service this morning; every body is away at the fire, or helping the poor people to carry away their goods. O, mother, if it should come here?" added Audrey, with bated breath, looking at her helpless sister.

"Launcelot will come back to give us warning in time," said Bessie, placidly. "We cannot go out to help those whose homes are being burned, but we can help them here," she

added. "Come and kneel down, and let us pray for them."

Mrs. Aylmer took up the prayer book again, and turned over the leaves; but she was in perplexity, for she knew not where to find a special form of prayer for such a calamity as this. Bessie waited a minute or two, the silence only broken by the dull roar of the flames and the crash of falling houses; but at length words of pleading entreaty wrung from her lips startled her mother at first, for it was the first time Bessie had ever prayed aloud; but now she spoke to God as though he was her Friend and Father, and could not fail to hear and answer her prayer. Audrey wondered, and Mrs. Aylmer was somewhat shocked, but she felt calm and trustful as she rose from her knees.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

ALL through that terrible Sunday morning the little family at the Blue Boar watched and prayed by turns, and still the fire grew apace, as they could see. Mrs. Aylmer and Audrey grew sick with despair at last. "Why does not Launcelot come back?" exclaimed the anxious mother. "We shall certainly be burnt; nothing can save the town now! O! God's judgments are very sore; will he never stay his hand from smiting this guilty city?"

"My mother, God loves London as well as us," said Bessie, through her tears. "We cannot understand it or see the mercy while this terrible fire is raging; but it is there all this same, and we must try to believe it."

"O, Bessie! to talk of mercy with half the town in flames, and poor women and children made homeless! But God is just, I know; we have brought this destruction upon ourselves by our sins, and we know God hates sin."

"Yes; but he loves the sinner, my mother

—loves him so much as to give his only Son to die for him; and therefore there *must* be mercy and love in this sore judgment."

At this moment, Audrey, who was standing by the window, uttered a loud groan; and at the same instant came the terrible crash of some falling building, while the roaring of the flames seemed increased tenfold.

"O, what is it?" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer, rushing to Audrey's side.

"Look, look, mother! All the boats and barges are on fire, and several of the houses on London Bridge; and see how the flames are sweeping this way!"

Mrs. Aylmer did see; and, as she looked at Bessie, she wrung her hands. "I must carry you myself to a place of safety," she said; "Audrey and I can do it easily." But now the most wonderful thing occurred.

As Mrs. Aylmer was about to raise Bessie on her couch, she suddenly raised herself and put her feet to the floor. "O, my mother, I can stand!" she exclaimed, in a tone of rapture.

But Mrs. Aylmer and Audrey could only stand and look, with such awe in their faces as rendered them speechless for a time.

Bessie looked at them, holding out her hands, and then looking down at her feet, with

a happy light of wonderful surprise in her face for a minute or two, until she was aroused by her mother's exclamation of joy. "And there is Launcelot," she said, as footsteps were heard on the stairs.

Audrey flew to the door, fairly screaming with delight. "Bessie can stand! Bessie can stand!"

"Odd's fish, girl; do you know the town is on fire?" said the visitor, as he came in.

At the sound of that voice Mrs. Aylmer started forward, and, with a grace that only one accustomed to court etiquette would know how to use, bowed herself before the stranger. "Sire, you have come to tell me of my son?" she said, in a tone of trembling earnestness.

"It is the king!" whispered Audrey, retreating to her sister's side.

"Who have we here?" said Charles, in no small surprise that he had been recognized, for he had ridden out to see the fire with only one or two attendants, and, hearing in the street that there were only women in the house, and one of them unable to leave her bed, he had come to tell them they had better get away before the fire came closer, for the wharves by the river-side were being gradually engulfed by the flames.

"It is—surely it is Dame Aylmer," said the king, in a tone of recognition.

"Yes, sire—and my son—does he live? or —tell me the worst!" for only Launcelot's death could account for this visit, she thought.

"Your son is well, for aught I know, madam!" said Charles, a little stiffly; and then, looking across at the two girls standing together in the window, recollections of other days conquered the returning ill feeling, and he exclaimed: "Odd's fish, we will let by-gones be by-gones. Come, Mistress Audrey, let me look at you; and my little monitor, Bessie, what has she to say to Charles now?"

"O, please your majesty, Bessie has not walked or stood on her feet for three years, until this minute!" said Audrey, with scant ceremony.

"Risen in honor of her king," laughed Charles. "But this is no place for an Aylmer," he said, looking round the room.

"We should like to go back to Aylmer Court," said Audrey, eagerly, who thought this chance of pleading with the king was too good to be lost.

"Hush, hush!" said her mother, warningly. She was shocked at the girl's want of court manners in addressing the king; but it evi-

dently amused Charles, and he was not at all displeased.

"Well, well! you cannot stay here, and you may as well go to Aylmer as anywhere else. My brother York will grumble a little at first, for he holds the manor, I trow, though I doubt whether he has ever made any use of it. Pack up at once, and I will send for a wagon to take you and your goods to Aylmer without delay. Give me pen and paper to write the order necessary to take with you." And Charles seated himself at the table and wrote a few words, ordering the steward who had charge of the estate to give it up at once to Mrs. Aylmer.

The lady was too much overwhelmed with surprise than to do more than murmur a few words of gratitude, as she knelt to receive the order that was to restore them to their own again; but anxiety for Launcelot overcame every other feeling at last, and she sobbed out, "My son, my son! have you no tidings, sire, of my son?" for she still feared that the king had heard of his death, and meant to console her in this way.

"Nay, nay! Pepys mentioned him to me as having done good service for us in the Navy Office, which proves that ye are all loyal still;

and I meant to do something for him after the war was over. But ye must have another house at once; and so, as ye want Aylmer Court, ye shall have it. But I have not seen or heard of Launcelot to-day," he added.

"Then, I pray God he may be safe still; but he has gone to help at the fire."

"He will speedily return," said Charles, lightly; "pack quickly what goods ye want to take to Aylmer, dame; for there is little time to lose;" and the king hurried away, leaving word at the last that a wagon would be at the door shortly.

"Let us kneel and thank God, and then we shall understand it better," said Bessie, when her mother returned after conducting the king to the street door; and Bessie fell on her knees by the couch where she had so long lain helpless, and returned thanks for the wonderful mercy that had been showered upon them, praying, too, that God would help and provide for the helpless ones whom this fire would render homeless. Then, as Bessie rose from her knees, Audrey suddenly recollected that she had no shoes on, and shoes and stockings had to be searched for; and while the oak chest was being turned out she walked across the room to try and assist in the packing; for Mrs.

Aylmer had speedily decided that they must take all they could with them, for fear they should find the house empty when they got there.

Mrs. Aylmer would not allow Bessie to do much in the way of packing. Audrey would have made a little festival of her sister's putting on shoes and stockings again, in spite of the awful crashing and roaring of the fire, that was now rapidly making its way toward them, for the efforts that were made to stay its progress were useless; but Mrs. Aylmer said they had no time for rejoicing even over Bessie: they must pack a few things and get away, for the lower part of the house was full of inflammable material, as well as the surrounding wharves; and the sparks were now falling so thickly that each moment they were in imminent danger of being surrounded by flames.

The king kept his word, and a wagon was soon at the door, and the men carried out the goods without much regard to Mrs. Aylmer's directions, urging her to make haste and seat herself in the wagon, or they would not be able to get out of the city before the fire was upon them. Mrs. Aylmer tried to delay the removal, in the hope of seeing Launcelot re-

turn; but the men hurried every thing out so fast that she feared they would have to go without any tidings of him, when, just as they were about to descend the stairs, Bessie leaning on her mother's arm, Launcelot rushed in.

"Thank God, you are safe!" he panted, too much overcome to notice that Bessie was *standing* before him, until she laid her hand upon his arm and said:

"Indeed, we have much to thank Him for, Launce."

"Bessie!" uttered her brother, scarce believing the evidence of his own senses.

"Yes; I have lain here, at the Beautiful Gate, like the lame man; but I am healed at last."

"And we are going to Aylmer Court, Launce," interrupted Audrey. "The king has been here and sent a wagon to fetch us."

"Where are you going, mother?" said the young man, ignoring what seemed like Audrey's wild talk.

"Now, then, the streets are getting so full we shall never get out of London if we don't start at once!" called one of the men from the foot of the stairs.

"We must go. I will carry Bessie," said Launcelet, taking his sister in his arms.

The men had packed the goods so as to form some comfortable seats for the family, and here they soon bestowed themselves, and the men whipped up their horses without asking which way they should go. It was needless at present, for they could but go westward. London Bridge being the only one built at present, there was no possibility of crossing the river, and they could but fall in line with the stream of vehicles that was bearing the unfortunate Londoners and their goods away from the fire.

The poorer people had carried all they could save to Finsbury Fields and other adjacent open spaces; but the wealthy merchants were anxious to get farther away, and it was no easy task, in the crowded state of the road, to get along at all. As they sat in the wagon, Mrs. Aylmer told her son all about the king's visit, and showed him the order he had written, empowering them to take up their residence at Aylmer Court. But, instead of being delighted, as he once would have been, Launcelot only looked puzzled and distressed.

"I can never go to court and take up the old life, mother," he said. "At present I cannot leave the Navy Office; I have promised Mr. Pepys I will return to him to-night, as

soon as I have taken you to a place of safety he has told me of."

"But we are going to Aylmer Court," said Audrey, quickly.

"But you cannot get there to-night," said her brother; "it is evening now. You must stay at the farm-house Mr. Pepys has recommended; and to-morrow it will be as well, perhaps, to push on, and take possession at once."

Audrey clapped her hands. "Only think, we shall see our own dear home to-morrow!" she exclaimed.

"I cannot come with you unless the fire is put out to-night," said Launcelot. "I have promised Mr. Pepys that I will not be away long, for fear it should be needful to move the Navy Office papers; for I know just where to put my hand on every thing, and it would cause endless confusion now if these should be burnt."

"I am sorry; but you will do your duty to the king, and I will not hinder you," said Mrs. Aylmer.

"I will try and write some letters to Mr. Maitland and Rosalind. She must come back to us now, mother," he said.

Audrey uttered an exclamation of dissent, and Bessie looked as though she would like to

prevent it if she could; but Mrs. Aylmer said, quietly: "Of course, we shall have Rosalind with us now."

This conversation had to be carried on in snatches, as they could make themselves heard above the roaring of the fire and the crash of falling buildings; and very little more could be said for some time, beyond making the driver understand where he was to go.

The farm-house where they were to stay for the night was only a little way beyond Holborn Fields, and here Launcelot left them, and returned to London.

The next morning, when they got up, they could see by the lurid pall of smoke that overhung them that the fire was still burning; and it was not until they were half-way to Aylmer Court that they got beyond the stifling smoke and out into the clear sunshine.

How sweet and peaceful every thing looked round their old home, as they drew near it in the warm sunshine of that September afternoon! Mrs. Aylmer was greatly overcome when her eyes first saw the well-remembered scene, and even Audrey's spirits were somewhat subdued as they came within sight of the quiet, empty house. As the wagon drew up at the entrance gates, an old man came

from a lodge at the side, and demanded what they wanted; but the moment he saw Mrs. Aylmer, he recognized her as his old mistress, and she knew him at once as a faithful servant.

"It is Tomkins, our butler!" exclaimed the lady, joyfully; and the next moment the gates were thrown wide open, and the old man was bidding them welcome with tearful earnestness. He had the keys of the house, and had taken care to keep it aired, and had not allowed it to fall into ruin since the departure of the last tenant, and he did not need to see the king's order before granting Mrs. Aylmer admittance. To her great joy, she found it little changed from what it had been when she left it. Furniture was made to last a generation or two in those days, and as none of this had been removed, it would be easy to make things home-like again.

Tomkins soon brought two of his daughters to light fires and make things comfortable; but the old man could do little more than walk behind Mrs. Aylmer as she went over the house, and ask questions of the past, for it was little news he had heard lately of the family he had served so long.

The next day and the next passed with no

news of Launcelot; but on Thursday afternoon he arrived, very tired and exhausted, after his exertions in London. The fire was out at last, but nearly half the city was in ruins, and hundreds were homeless. He had written to Rosalind, and so she might be expected any day, as she would doubtless leave Eyam the first opportunity she had. "I have also written to Mr. Maitland, telling him all that has happened; and when the king has settled matters with the Duke of York, and duly transferred the estate to you, mother, we will invite him to come and be our chaplain."

In truth, Launcelot was afraid to take any step until this necessary business had been done; for although it was but the barest justice that this should be done, he knew the grasping disposition of the duke and the careless prodigality of the king so well now, that he refused to give up his position in Mr. Pepys's office until their position at Aylmer was quite secure.

"I don't believe Launcelot cares whether he lives here or at the Blue Boar," said Audrey, pouting, when she heard that her brother would return to London in a day or two.

"O, yes, I love the dear old place," said Launcelot; "but I learned to know of my

other inheritance while I lived at the Blue Boar—the dear, shabby old home: it is in ashes now; but I shall never forget it, or the lessons I learned there. But for these, I should have been a thoughtless gallant of King Charles's court; but now, if I am spared to come to this earthly inheritance, I trust I shall use it in my Master's service."

But although Launcelot said this cheerfully, Bessie knew that he was not glad to come back to their old home—that he was afraid—afraid of himself, and afraid of the wealth God had given them again; and as she slipped her arm in his, to walk to the garden, she whispered: "Trust in him, Launce: we have trusted him in tribulation, and he has helped us; now he says to us, in all times of wealth, 'Trust Me still.'"

"But if it should dim the holy Light for us, Bessie?" said Launcelot, with a sigh.

"But it cannot, unless we make it. We are weak, but God is mighty—mighty to save even in times of wealth. How we shrank from poverty before! But God took away the sting, and made it very sweet at last; and so he can make our wealth as rich a blessing to us, for we may now become his almoners, feeding his poor, teaching the ignorant of his flock,

and holding up the holy Light of our Saviour's life and love wherever we go. Think how much we can do for the villagers here now! Mother will teach them that to be clean is the best way to keep off the plague; and Mr. Maitland will have a school, and if he cannot preach in the church, he can in our own big stone kitchen. O, Launce, my heart is brimming over with joy and gladness!"

There was no need to ask whether Audrey was glad. She was in a constant ripple of contented gladness, not even grumbling when she heard that Rosalind might arrive the very next week.

But, alas! Rosalind never came to Aylmer Court. The next week brought a letter, full of sorrow, from Mr. Stanley, saying that his niece had died of the plague. The village of Eyam was almost depopulated by its ravages. He and Mr. Mompesson, the vicar, had done all they could for the relief of the sufferers, and must have carried the infection to their homes; for Mrs. Mompesson died of it first; and, although Rosalind had been careful not to go near any of the sick, she took it, and died soon afterward. This was the substance of the letter, and it cast a gloom over their happiness; for, little as Rosalind was liked, it

was sad to think how, by her own impatience, she had again and again defeated herself, and at last come to an untimely end, just as her hopes of gaining ease and luxury might have been realized.

But cheerful news came from Mary Maitland. They were all well and happy; only her father was pining for work, and fretting against the restraint imposed upon him by the "Five-mile Act," which debarred him from all active service as a teacher and minister.

Meanwhile, the necessary law business for the transfer of Aylmer Court and the whole estate belonging to it to its rightful owners was pushed forward as rapidly as possible, by the order of the king. How he managed to satisfy his rapacious brother nobody knew; but it was significant that Sir William Coventry suddenly recollected, when he met Launcelot, that he had seen him before; and it was generally understood that Mr. Pepys had contrived to push his interests at court; so that it was not long before Mrs. Aylmer was able to write and ask Mr. Maitland to become her domestic chaplain. This, as she knew, would give him the long-desired work which he craved; for, as the representative of a well-known Royalist family, he would be above

suspicion, and could do much that a private minister could not, although the odious "Five-mile Act" would still prevent him doing a good deal that he might wish.

Need we add that the Aylmer family became a blessing to the neighborhood where they lived, and far beyond their own particular locality; that the poor and ignorant for miles around had good reason to thank God, as well as Launcelot, for the lessons he had taught them at the sign of the Blue Boar?

THE END.

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